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GEORG EBERS

XIV

IN THE BLUE PIKE

A QUESTION

THE ELIXIR

A Question.

A Question.

Photogravure from a painting by L. Alma-Tadema

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS

IN THE BLUE PIKE

Translated from the German by
Mary J. Safford

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Dedicated

TO

HERR ADOLF SCHWABE

AND HIS BELOVED, HONOURED WIFE,

FRAU MATHILDE SCHWABE,

IN OLD AND LOYAL FRIENDSHIP,

BY THE AUTHOR,

GEORG EBERS.

179126

IN THE BLUE PIKE.

CHAPTER I.

"MAY a thunderbolt strike you!" The imprecation suited the rough fellow who uttered it. He had pointed out of doors as he spoke, and scarcely lowered the strange tones of his voice, yet of all the rabble who surrounded him only two persons understood his meaning—a fading, sickly girl, and the red-haired woman, only a few years her senior, who led the swearing man by a chain, like a tame bear.

The Nuremberg magistrates had had Cyriax's tongue cropped for gross blasphemy, and listeners could scarcely comprehend the words he mangled in his gasping speech.

The red-haired woman dropped the knife

with which she was slicing bread and onions into a pot, and looked at her companion with an anxious, questioning glance.

"Nuremberg Honourables," he stammered as fast as he could, snatched his wife's shawl from her shoulders, and drew it over his unkempt head.

The woman beckoned to their travelling companions—a lame fellow of middle age who, propped on crutches, leaned against the wall, an older pock-marked man with a bloated face, and the sickly girl—calling to them in the harsh, metallic voice peculiar to hawkers and elderly singers at fairs.

"Help Cyriax hide. You first, Jungel! They needn't recognise him as soon as they get in. Nuremberg magistrates are coming. Aristocratic blood-suckers of the Council. Who knows what may still be on the tally for us?"

Kuni, the pale-faced girl, wrapped her bright-coloured garment tighter around her mutilated left leg, and obeyed. Lame Jungel, too, prepared to fulfil red-haired Gitta's wish.

But Raban had glanced out, and hastily drew the cloth jerkin, patched with green and blue linen, closer through his belt, ejaculating anxiously:

"Young Groland of the Council. I know him."

This exclamation induced the other vagabonds to glide along the wall to the nearest door, intending to slip out.

"A Groland?" asked Gitta, Cyriax's wife, cowering as if threatened with a blow from an invisible hand. "It was he——"

"He?" laughed the chain-bearer, while he crouched beside her, drawing himself into the smallest space possible. "No, Redhead! The devil dragged the man who did that down to the lower regions long ago, on account of my tongue. It's his son. The younger, the sharper. This stripling made Casper Rubling,* poor wretch, pay for his loaded dice with his eyesight."

He thrust his hand hurriedly into his jerkin

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* Dice, in gambler's slang.

as he spoke, and gave Gitta something which he had concealed there. It was a set of dice, but, with ready presence of mind, she pressed them so hard into the crumb of the loaf of bread which she had just cut that it entirely concealed them.

All this had passed wholly unnoticed in the corner of the long, wide room, for all the numerous travellers whom it sheltered were entirely occupied with their own affairs. Nothing was understood except what was said between neighbour and neighbour, for a loud uproar pervaded the tavern of The Blue Pike.

It was one of the most crowded inns, being situated on the main ferry at Miltenberg, where those journeying from Nuremberg, Augsburg, and other South German cities, on their way to Frankfort and the Lower Rhine, rested and exchanged the saddle for the ship. Just at the present time many persons of high and low degree were on their way to Cologne, whither the Emperor Maximilian, having been unable to come in April to

Trier on the Moselle, had summoned the Reichstag.

The opening would take place in a few days, and attracted not only princes, counts, and knights, exalted leaders and more modest servants of the Church, ambassadors from the cities, and other aristocrats, but also honest tradesfolk, thriving money-lenders with the citizen's cloak and the yellow cap of the Jew, vagrants and strollers of every description, who hoped to practise their various feats to the best advantage, or to fill their pockets by cheating and robbery.

This evening many had gathered in the spacious taproom of The Blue Pike. Now those already present were to be joined by the late arrivals whom Cyriax had seen ride up.

It was a stately band. Four aristocratic gentlemen at the head of the troop were followed by an escort of twenty-five Nuremberg mercenaries, a gay company whose crimson coats, with white slashes on the puffed sleeves, presented a showy spectacle. Their helmets

and armour glittered in the bright light of the setting sun of the last day of July, as they turned their horses in front of the wide gateway of The Blue Pike to ride into Miltenberg and ask lodgings of the citizens.

The trampling of hoofs, the shouts of command, and the voices of the gentlemen and their attendants outside attracted many guests to the doors and windows of the long, white-washed building.

The strollers, however, kept the place at theirs without difficulty; no one desired to come near them.

The girl with the bandaged foot had now also turned her face toward the street. As her gaze rested on the youngest of the Nuremberg dignitaries, her pale cheeks flushed, and, as if unconsciously, the exclamation "It is he!" fell from her lips.

"Who?" asked red-haired Gitta, and was quickly answered in a low tone:

"I mean Lienhard, Herr Groland."

"The young one," stuttered Cyriax.

Then, raising the shawl, he continued inquisitively:

"Do you know him? For good or for evil?"

The girl, whose face, spite of its sunken cheeks and the dark rings under the deep-set blue eyes, still bore distinct traces of former beauty, started and answered sharply, though not very loudly, for speech was difficult:

"Good is what you call evil, and evil is what you call good. My acquaintance with Lienhard, Herr Groland, is my own affair, and, you may be sure, will remain mine."

She glanced contemptuously away from the others out of doors, but Cyriax, spite of his mutilated tongue, retorted quickly and harshly:

"I always said so. She'll die a saint yet."

Then grasping Kuni's arm roughly, he dragged her down to him, and whispered jeeringly:

"Ratz has a full purse and sticks to his offer for the cart. If you put on airs long, he'll get it and the donkey, too, and you'll be

left here. What was it about Groland? You can try how you'll manage on your stump without us, if we're too bad for you."

"We are not under eternal obligations to you on the child's account," added red-haired Gitta in a gentler tone. "Don't vex my husband, or he'll keep his word about the cart, and who else will be bothered with a useless creature like you?"

The girl lowered her eyes and looked at her crippled limb.

How would she get on without the cart, which received her when the pain grew too sharp and the road was too hard and long?

So she turned to the others again, saying soothingly:

"It all happened in the time before I fell."

Then she looked out of doors once more, but she did not find what she sought. The Nuremberg travellers had ridden through the broad gateway into the large square courtyard, surrounded by stables on three sides.

When Cyriax and his wife again called to her, desiring to know what had passed be-

tween her and Groland, she clasped her hands around her knees, fixed her eyes on the gay stuffs wound around the stump where her foot had been amputated, and in a low, reluctant tone, continued:

"You want to learn what I have to do with Herr Groland? It was about six years ago, in front of St. Sebald's church, in Nuremberg. A wedding was to take place. The bridegroom was one of the Council—Lienhard Groland. The marriage was to be a very quiet one—the bridegroom's father lay seriously ill. Yet there could have been no greater throng at the Emperor's nuptials. I stood in the midst of the crowd. A rosary dropped from the belt of the fat wife of a master workman—she was decked out like a peacock—and fell just in front of me. It was a costly ornament, pure gold and Bohemian garnets. I did not let it lie there."

"A miracle!" chuckled Cyriax, but the girl was obliged to conquer a severe attack of coughing before she could go on with her story.

"The chaplet fairly burned my hand. I would gladly have given it back, but the woman was no longer before me. Perhaps I might have returned it, but I won't say so positively. However, there was no time to do it; the wedding party was coming, and on that account—— But what is the use of talking? While I was still gazing, the owner discovered her loss. An officer seized me, and so I was taken to prison and the next day was brought before the magistrates. Herr Groland was one of them, and, since it wasn't certain that I would not have restored the property I found, he interceded in my behalf. When the others still wished to punish me, he besought my release because it was my first offence. So we met, and when I admit that I am grateful to him for it, you know all."

"H'm," replied Cyriax, giggling, as he nudged his wife in the side and made remarks concerning what he had just heard which induced even red-haired Gitta to declare that the loss of his tongue was scarcely a misfortune.

Kuni indignantly turned her back upon the slanderer and gazed out of the window again. The Nuremberg Honourables had disappeared, but several grooms were unbuckling the knapsacks from the horses and carrying them into the house. The aristocratic travellers were probably cleansing themselves from the dust of the road before they entered the taproom.

Kuni thought so, and gazed sometimes into vacancy, sometimes into her own lap. Her eyes had a dreamy light, for the incident which she had just related rose before her mind with perfect clearness.

It seemed as though she were gazing a second time at the wedding procession which was approaching St. Sebald's, and the couple who led it.

Never had she beheld anything fairer than the bride with the myrtle wreath on her beautifully formed head, whence a delicate lace veil floated over her long, thick, golden hair. She could not help gazing at her as if spellbound. When she moved forward, holding

her bridegroom's hand, she appeared to float over the rice and flowers strewn in her path to the church—it was in February. As Kuni saw the bride raise her large blue eyes to her lover's so tenderly and yet so modestly, and the bridegroom thank her with a long joyous look of love, she wondered what must be the feelings of a maiden who, so pure, so full of ardent love, and so fervently beloved in return, was permitted to approach the house of God, accompanied by a thousand pious wishes, with the first and only man whom she loved, and to whom she wished to devote herself for her whole life. Again, as at that time, a burning thrill ran through her limbs. Then a bitter smile hovered around her lips.

She had asked herself whether the heart of one who experienced such joys, to whom such a fate was allotted, would not burst from sheer joy. Now the wish, the hope, and every new resolve for good or ill were alike over. At that hour, before the door of St. Sebald's, she had been capable of all, all, perhaps even the best things, if any one had cherished her in his

heart as Lienhard Groland loved the beautiful woman at his side.

She could not help remembering the spell with which the sight of those two had forced her to watch their every movement, to gaze at them, and them only, as if the world contained nothing else. How often she had repeated to herself that in that hour she was bewitched, whether by him or by her she could not decide. As the throng surged forward, she had been crowded against the woman who lost the rosary. She had not had the faintest thought of it when the bailiff suddenly snatched her from her rapturous gazing to stern reality, seizing with a rude grip the hand that held the jewel. Then, pursued by the reviling and hissing of the populace, she had been taken to prison.

Now she again saw herself amid the vile rabble assembled there, again felt how eagerly she inhaled the air as she was led across the courtyard of the townhall into the presence of the magistrates. Oh, if she could but take such a long, deep breath of God's pure air as

she did then! But that time was past. Her poor, sunken chest would no longer permit it.

Then she fancied that she was again standing before the judges, who were called The Five.

Four magistrates sat with the Pfänder* at the table covered with a green cloth, but one, who surpassed all the others both in stature and in manly beauty, was the selfsame Lienhard Groland, who yesterday had led to the altar the wonderfully lovely girl who had bewitched her. She felt how the blood had mounted into her cheeks when she again saw him who could know nothing of her except that she was a jade, who had stolen another person's property. Yet her glance soon met his, and he must have been blind had he not read in the radiant lustre of her blue eyes, which had early learned to woo applause and promise love, what he was to her, and how gratefully her heart throbbed for him.

After the other gentlemen had treated her

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* Chief of police.

harshly, and threatened to put her in the stocks, he interceded for her, and entreated his brother magistrates to let mercy, in this instance, take the place of justice, because she was so young, and perhaps had intended to return the rosary later. Finally he bent smiling toward his companions and said something to them in a subdued tone. The voice was so low that his intention to keep her in ignorance of it was evident. But Kuni's hearing had been as keen as a bird's, and not a word escaped her. He could not help regarding it as an evil omen for him and his young wife if a girl, hitherto unpunished, should be plunged into disgrace and perhaps made miserable throughout the rest of a long life on account of his wedding procession.

How high her heart had throbbed at this request, and when it was granted, the discussion closed, and she herself informed that she would be set free, she hurried after her preserver, who had left the Council chamber with the other magistrates, to thank him. He permitted her to detain him, and when she

found herself alone in his presence, at first, with streaming eyes, she was unable to utter a word. He laid his hand kindly on her shoulder to soothe her, and then listened to her assurance that, though she was a strolling ropedancer, she had never taken other people's property.

Now she closed her eyes to have a clearer vision of the picture evoked by memory, which rose so vividly before her. Again she saw herself seize his hand to kiss it humbly, yet with fervent devotion; again she met the patronizing but friendly smile with which he withdrew it, and a thrill of happiness ran through every nerve, for she imagined she once more felt his slender white hand soothingly stroke her black hair and burning cheeks, as if she were a sick child who needed help. Later years had never granted her aught more blissful than that moment.

As had often happened before, the memory of it overmastered her with such power that she could not escape it, but recalled his every look and movement. Meanwhile, she

imagined that she heard his voice, whose deep, pure tones had pleased her ear, alive to harmony, more than any to which she had ever listened, counselling her to give up her vagrant life, and again received his assurance that he pitied her, and it would grieve him if she, who seemed worthy of a better fate, should be ruined, body and soul, so young. Thus absorbed, she neither saw nor listened to anything that was occurring near her or in the large room of the tavern, but stood gazing into vacancy as if rapt away from earth.

True, Cyriax and the others had lowered their voices, for they were talking about her and the aristocratic couple on whose wedding day Kuni had stolen the rosary.

Raban, a tall, lank vagabond with red-rimmed eyes, whose ugly face bristled with a half-grown black beard, had a few more particulars to give concerning the bride and bridegroom. He wandered about the world and, whenever he stretched out his hand to beg, gave the pretext that he was collecting

the price of blood required for a man whom he had killed in self-defence, that his own head might not fall under the axe of the executioner. His dead father had heated the furnaces in the smelting works at Eschenbach, near Nuremberg, and the bride was Katharina, the eldest of the three daughters of the owner, old Harsdörffer of the Council. He had been a man of steel and iron, and opposed Lienhard Groland's father at every point, not excepting even their official business. When he discovered that the young man was carrying on a love affair with his daughter, he had summoned him before a court of justice for a breach of the law which forbade minors to betroth themselves without parental consent. The magistrates sentenced Lienhard to five years' exile from the city but, through the Emperor's mediation, he was spared the punishment. Old Harsdörffer afterward succeeded in keeping the suitor away from his daughter a long time, but finally relinquished his opposition.

"The devil came soon enough and broke

his stiff neck," added Cyriax, on whom the vagabond's story had had the same effect as a red rag upon a bull. Spite of the old slanderer's mutilated tongue, invectives flowed fast enough from his lips when he thought of young Frau Groland's father. If the Groland outside resembled his father-in-law, he would like to drink him a pledge that should burn like the plague and ruin.

He snatched a flask from his pocket as he spoke, and after a long pull and a still longer "A—ah!" he stammered:

"I've been obliged to bid farewell to my tongue, yet it feels as if it were sticking in my throat like the dry sole of a shoe. That's what comes from talking in this dog-day heat."

He looked into the empty bottle and was about to send Kuni out to fill it again. In turning to do so he saw her pale face, wan with suffering, but which now glowed with a happy light that lent it a strange beauty. How large her blue eyes were! When he had picked her up in Spain she was already a

cripple and in sore distress. But Groland probably knew what he was about when he released her. She must have been a pretty creature enough at that time, and he knew that before her fall she was considered one of the most skilful ropedancers.

An elderly woman with a boy, whose blindness helped her to arouse compassion, was crouching by Raban's side, and had just been greeted by Kuni as an old acquaintance. They had journeyed from land to land in Loni's famous troupe, and as Raban handed Cyriax his own bottle, he turned from the dreaming girl, whose services he no longer needed, and whispered to the blind boy's mother—who among the people of her own calling still went by the name of Dancing Gundel—the question whether yonder ailing cripple had once had any good looks, and what position she had held among rope-dancers.

The little gray-haired woman looked up with sparkling eyes. Under the name of "Phyllis" she had earned, ere her limbs were

stiffened by age, great applause by her dainty egg-dance and all sorts of feats with the balancing pole. The manager of the band had finally given her the position of crier to support herself and her blind boy. This had made her voice so hollow and hoarse that it was difficult to understand her as, with fervid eloquence, vainly striving to be heard by absent-minded Kuni, she began: "She surpassed even Maravella the Spaniard. And her feats at Augsburg during the Reichstag—I tell you, Cyriax, when she ascended the rope to the belfry, with the pole and without——"

"I've just heard of that from another quarter," he interrupted. "What I want to know is whether she pleased the eyes of men."

"What's that to you?" interposed red-haired Gitta jealously, trying to draw him away from Gundel by the chain.

Raban laughed heartily, and lame Jungel, chuckling, rapped on the floor with his right crutch, exclaiming:

"Good for you!"

Kuni was accustomed to such outbursts of

merriment. They were almost always awakened by some trifle, and this time she did not even hear the laughing. But Cyriax struck his wife so rudely on the hand that she jerked furiously at the chain and, with a muttered oath, blew on the bruised spot. Meanwhile Gundel was telling the group how many distinguished gentlemen had formerly paid court to Kuni. She was as agile as a squirrel. Her pretty little face, with its sparkling blue eyes, attracted the men as bacon draws mice. Then, pleased to have listeners, she related how the girl had lured florins and zecchins from the purse of many a wealthy ecclesiastic. She might have been as rich as the Fuggers if she hadn't met with the accident and had understood how to keep what she earned. But she could not hold on to her gold. She had flung it away like useless rubbish. So long as she possessed anything there had been no want in Loni's company. She, Gundel, had caught her arm more than once when she was going to fling Hungarian ducats, instead of coppers, to good-for-nothing beggars. She had often

urged her, too, to think of old age, but Kuni never cared for any one longer than a few weeks, though there were some whom she might easily have induced to offer her the wedding ring.

She glanced at Kuni again, but, perceiving that the girl did not yet vouchsafe her even a single look, she was vexed, and, moving nearer to Cyriax, she added in a still lower tone:

"A more inconstant, faithless, colder heart than hers I never met, even among the most disorderly of Loni's band; for, blindly as the infatuated lovers obeyed every one of her crazy whims, she laughed at the best and truest. 'I hate them all,' she would say. 'I wouldn't let one of them even touch me with the tip of his finger if I could not use their zecchins. With these,' she said, 'she would help the rich to restore to the poor what they had stolen from them.' She really treated many a worthy gentleman like a dog, nay, a great deal worse; for she was tender enough to all the animals that travelled with the company; the poodles and the ponies, nay, even

the parrots and the doves. She would play with the children, too, even the smallest ones —isn't that so, Peperle?—like their own silly mothers." She smoothed the blind boy's golden hair as she spoke, then added, sighing:

"But the little fellow was too young to remember it. The rattle which she gave him at Augsburg—it was just before the accident —because she was so fond of him—Saint Kunigunde, how could we keep such worthless jewels in our sore need?—was made of pure silver. True, the simpletons who were so madly in love with her, and with whom she played so cruelly, would have believed her capable of anything sooner than such kindness. There was a Swabian knight, a young fellow——"

Here she stopped, for Cyriax and the other vagabonds, even the girl of whom she was speaking, had started up and were gazing at the door.

Kuni opened her eyes as wide as if a miracle had happened, and the crimson spots on her sunken cheeks betrayed how deeply she

was agitated. But she had never experienced anything of this kind; for while thinking of the time when, through Lienhard Groland's intercession, she had entered the house of the wealthy old Frau Schürstab, in order to become estranged from a vagabond life, and recalling how once, when he saw her sorrowful there, he had spoken kindly to her, it seemed as if she had actually heard his own voice. As it still appeared to echo in her ears, she suddenly became aware that the words really did proceed from his lips. What she had heard in her dream and what now came from his own mouth, as he stood at the door, blended into one. She would never have believed that the power of imagination could reproduce anything so faithfully.

Listening intently, she said to herself that, during the many thousand times when she had talked with him in fancy, it had also seemed as if she heard him speak. And the same experience had befallen her eyes; for whenever memory reverted to those distant days, she had beheld him just as he now

looked standing on the threshold, where he was detained by the landlady of The Pike. Only his face had become still more manly, his bearing more dignified. The pleasant, winning expression of the bearded lips remained unchanged, and more than once she had seen his eyes sparkle with a far warmer light than now, while he was thanking the portly woman for her cordial welcome.

While Kuni's gaze still rested upon him as if spellbound, Çyriax nudged her, stammering hurriedly:

"They will have to pass us. Move forward, women, in front of me. Spread out your skirt, you Redhead! It might be my death if yonder Nuremberg fine gentleman should see me here and recollect one thing and another."

As he spoke he dragged Kuni roughly from the window, flung the sack which he had brought in from the cart down before him, and made them sit on it, while he stretched himself on the floor face downward, and pretended to be asleep behind the women.

This suited Kuni. If Lienhard Groland passed her now he could not help seeing her, and she had no greater desire than to meet his glance once more before her life ended. Yet she dreaded this meeting with an intensity plainly revealed by the passionate throbbing of her heart and the panting of her weakened lungs. There was a rushing noise in her ears, and her eyes grew dim. Yet she was obliged to keep them wide open—what might not the next moment bring?

For the first time since her entrance she gazed around the large, long apartment, which would have deserved the name of hall had it not been too low.

The heated room, filled with buzzing flies, was crowded with travellers. The wife and daughter of a feather-curler, who were on their way with the husband and father to the Reichstag, where many an aristocratic gentleman would need plumes for his own head and his wife's, had just dropped the comb with which they were arranging each other's hair. The shoemaker and his dame from Nurem-

berg paused in the sensible lecture they were alternately addressing to their apprentices. The Frankfort messenger put down the needle with which he was mending the badger-skin in his knapsack. The travelling musicians who, to save a few pennies, had begun to eat bread, cheese, and radishes, instead of the warm meals provided for the others, let their knives drop and set down the wine-jugs. The traders, who were hotly arguing over Italian politics and the future war with Turkey, were silent. The four monks, who had leaned their heads against the cornice of the wide, closed fireplace and, in spite of the flies which buzzed around them, had fallen asleep, awoke. The vender of indulgences in the black cowl interrupted the impressive speech which he was delivering to the people who surrounded his coffer. This group also—soldiers, travelling artisans, peasants, and tradesfolk with their wives, who, like most of those present, were waiting for the vessel which was to sail down the Main early the next morning—gazed toward the door. Only the stu-

dents and Bacchantes,* who were fairly hanging on the lips of a short, slender scholar, with keen, intellectual features, noticed neither the draught of air caused by the entrance of the distinguished arrivals and their followers, nor the general stir aroused by their appearance, until Dr. Eberbach, the insignificant, vivacious speaker, recognised in one of the group the famous Nuremberg humanist, Wilibald Pirckheimer.

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* Travelling scholars.

CHAPTER II.

At first Dietel, the old waiter, whose bullet-shaped head was covered with thick gray hair, also failed to notice them. Without heeding their entrance, he continued,—aided by two assistants who were scarcely beyond boyhood,—to set the large and small pine tables which he had placed wherever he could find room.

The patched tablecloths which he spread over the tops were coarse and much worn; the dishes carried after him by the two assistants, whose knees bent under the burden, were made of tin, and marred by many a dent. He swung his stout body to and fro with jerks like a grasshopper, and in doing so his shirt rose above his belt, but the white napkin under his arm did not move a finger's

width. In small things, as well as great ones, Dietel was very methodical. So he continued his occupation undisturbed till an inexperienced merchant's clerk from Ulm, who wanted to ride farther speedily, accosted him and asked for some special dish. Dietel drew his belt farther down and promptly snubbed the young man with the angry retort; "Everybody must wait for his meal. We make no exceptions here."

Interrupted in his work, he also saw the newcomers, and then cast a peevish glance at one corner of the room, where stood a table covered with fine linen and set with silver dishes, among them a platter on which early pears and juicy plums were spread invitingly. The landlady of The Pike had arranged them daintily upon fresh vine leaves an hour before with her own plump but nimble hands. Of course they were intended for the gentlemen from Nuremberg and their guests. Dietel, too, now knew them, and saw that the party numbered a person no less distinguished than the far-famed and highly

learned Doctor and Imperial Councillor, Conrad Peutinger. They were riding to Cologne together under the same escort. The citizens of Nuremberg were distinguished men, as well as their guest, but Dietel had served distinguished personages by the dozen at The Blue Pike for many years—among them even crowned heads—and they had wanted for nothing. His skill, however, was not sufficient for these city demigods; for the landlord of The Pike intended to look after their table himself. Tomfoolery! There was more than enough for him to do that day over yonder in the room occupied by the lansquenets and the city soldiers, where he usually directed affairs in person. It roused Dietel's ire. The cooking of The Blue Pike, which the landlady superintended, could vie with any in the Frank country, on the Rhine, or in Swabia, yet, forsooth, it wasn't good enough for the Nuremberg guests. The Council cook, a fat, pompous fellow, accompanied them, and had already begun to bustle about the hearth beside the hostess. They

really would have required no service at all, for they brought their own attendants. It certainly was not Dietel's usual custom to wish any one evil, but if Götz Berlichinger, who had recently attacked a party of Leipsic merchants at Forchheim, or Hans von Geisslingen had fallen upon them and subdued their arrogance, it would not have spoiled Dietel's appetite.

At last they moved forward. The others might treat them as they chose; he, at least, would neither say anything to them nor bow before them as the ears did before Joseph in Holy Writ. Nevertheless, he looked out of the corner of his eye at them as he took from the basket of the round-cheeked kitchen maid, who had now found her way to him, one fresh brown roll after another, and placed them beside plate after plate. How well risen and how crusty they were! They fairly cracked under the pressure of the thumb, yet wheat rolls had been baked specially for the Nuremberg party. Was God's good gift too poor for the Honourables with the gold chains?

Now, even fragile little Dr. Eberbach, and the students and Bacchantes who had stood around him like disciples, intently listening to his words, bowed respectfully. The ungodly, insolent fellows who surrounded the Dominican Jacobus, the vender of indulgences, had turned from him, while he exhorted them, as if he were an importunate beggar. What did the merchants, artisans, and musicians know about the godless Greek and Latin writings which brought the names of Pirckheimer and Peutinger before the people, yet how reverently many of these folk now bowed before them. Only the soldiers with swords at their sides held their heads erect. They proved that they were right in calling themselves "pious lansquenets." The broad-shouldered knight, with the plumed hat and suit of mail, who walked beside them, was Sir Hans von Obernitz, the Schultheiss of Nuremberg. He was said to be a descendant of the ancient Brandenstein race, and yet—was the world topsy-turvy?—he, too, was listening to every word uttered by Wilibald Pirckheimer and

Dr. Peutinger as if it were a revelation. The gray-haired leech and antiquary, Hartmann Schedel, whom Herr Wilibald,—spite of the gout which sometimes forced a slight grimace to distort his smooth-shaven, clever, almost over-plump face,—led by the arm like a careful son, resembled, with his long, silver locks, a patriarch or an apostle.

The young envoy of the Council, Herr Lienhard Groland, lingered behind the others and seemed to be taking a survey of the room.

What bright, keen eyes he had; how delicately cut was the oval face with the strong, very slightly hooked nose; how thick were the waving brown locks that fell upon the slender neck; how well the pointed beard suited his chin; with what austere majesty his head rose above the broad, plaited, snow-white ruff, which he must have just donned!

Now his eyes rested upon the vagrants, and Dietel perceived something which threw him completely off his balance; for the first time he changed the position of his napkin, jerking it from its place under his left arm to

tuck it beneath the right one. He had known Kuni a long time. In her prosperous days, when she was the ornament of Loni's band and had attracted men as a ripe pear draws wasps, she had often been at the tavern, and both he and the landlord of The Pike had greeted her cordially, for whoever sought her favour was obliged to order the best and dearest of everything, not only for her and himself, but for a whole tableful of hungry guests. When she had met him just now he would never have recognised her had she not been in Gundel's company. True, the sight of her in this plight was not unexpected, yet it pierced him to the heart, for Kuni had been a remarkable girl, and yet was now in far greater penury than many of much less worth whom he had watched stumbling along the downward path before her. When he saw Lienhard Groland's glance rest upon her, he noticed also how strangely her emaciated face changed colour. Though it had just been as white as the napkin under his arm, it now flushed as red as the balsam blossoms in the

window, and then paled again. She had formerly gazed around her boldly enough, but now she lowered her eyes to the floor as modestly as any demure maiden on her way to church.

And what did this mean?

The honourable member of the Nuremberg Council must be well acquainted with the girl, for his eyes had scarcely met hers ere a strange smile flitted over his grave, manly face.

Now—was it in jest or earnest?—he even shook his finger at her. He stopped in front of her a moment, too, and Dietel heard him exclaim;

"So here you are! On the highway again, in spite of everything?"

The distance which separated them and the loud talking of the guests prevented the waiter's hearing her reply, "The captive bird can not endure the cage long, Herr Lienhard," far less the words, added in a lower tone:

"Yet flight has been over since my fall at Augsburg. My foot lies buried there with

many other things which will never return. I can only move on wheels behind the person who takes me." Then she paused and ventured to look him full in the face. Her eyes met his beaming with a radiant light, but directly after they were dimmed by a mist of tears. Yet she forced them back, though the deep suffering from which they sprung was touchingly apparent in the tone of her voice, as she continued:

"I have often wished, Herr Lienhard, that the cart was my coffin and the tavern the graveyard."

Dietel noticed the fit of coughing which followed this speech, and the hasty movement with which the Nuremberg patrician thrust his hand into his purse and tossed Kuni three coins. They did not shine with the dull white lustre of silver, but with the yellow glitter of gold. The waiter's eyes were sharp and he had his own ideas about this unprecedented liberality.

The travelling companions of the aristocratic burgomaster and ambassadors of the

proud city of Nuremberg had also noticed this incident.

After they had taken their seats at the handsomely ornamented table, Wilibald Pirckheimer bent toward the ear of his young friend and companion in office, whispering:

"The lovely wife at home whom you toiled so hard to win, might, I know, rest quietly, secure in the possession of all the charms of foam-born Aphrodite, yet I warn you. Whoever is as sure of himself as you cares little for the opinion of others. And yet we stand high, friend Lienhard, and therefore are seen by all; but the old Argus who watches for his neighbour's faults has a hundred sharp eyes, while among the gods three are blind—Justice, Happiness, and Love. Besides, you flung gold to yonder worthless rabble. I would rather have given it to the travelling musicians. They, like us humanists, are allied to the Muses and, moreover, are harmless, happy folk."

Lienhard Groland listened till his older friend had finished. Then, after thanking

him for his well-meant counsel, he answered, turning to the others also:

"In better days ropedancing was the profession of yonder poor, coughing creature. Now, after a severe accident, she is dragging herself through life on one foot. I once knew her, for I succeeded in saving her from terrible disgrace."

"And," replied Wilibald Pirckheimer, "we would rather show kindness a second and a third time to any one on whom we have bestowed a favour than to render it once to a person from whom we have received one. This is my own experience. But the wise man must guard against nothing more carefully than to exceed moderation in his charity. How easily, when Caius sees Cnejus lavish gold where silver or copper would serve, he thinks of Martial's apt words: 'Who gives great gifts, expects great gifts again.'* Do not misunderstand me. What could yonder poor thing bestow that would please even a

* Martial, Epigram 5, 59, 3.

groom? But the eyes of suspicion scan even the past. I have often seen you open your purse, friend Lienhard, and this is right. Whoever hath ought to give, and my dead mother used to say that 'No one ever became a beggar by giving at the proper time.'"

"And life is gladdened by what one gives to another," remarked Conrad Peutinger, the learned Augsburg city clerk, who valued his Padua title of doctor more than that of an imperial councillor. "It applies to all departments. Don't allow yourself to regret your generosity, friend Lienhard. 'Nothing becomes man better than the pleasure of giving,' says Terentius.* Who is more liberal than the destiny which adorns the apple tree that is to bear a hundred fruits, with ten thousand blossoms to please our eyes ere it satisfies our appetite?"

"To you, if to any one, it gives daily proof of liberality in both learning and the affairs of life," Herr Wilibald assented.

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* Terenz. Ad. 860.

"If you will substitute 'God, our Lord,' for 'destiny,' I agree with you," observed the Abbot of St. Ægidius in Nuremberg.

The portly old prelate nodded cordially to Dr. Peutinger as he spoke. The warm, human love with which he devoted himself to the care of souls in his great parish consumed the lion's share of his time and strength. He spent only his leisure hours in the study of the ancient writers, in whom he found pleasure, and rejoiced in the work of the humanists without sharing their opinions.

"Yes, my dear Doctor," he continued in his deep voice, in a tone of the most earnest conviction, "if envy were ever pardonable, he who presumed to feel it toward you might most speedily hope to find forgiveness. There is no physical or mental gift with which the Lord has not blessed you, and to fill the measure to overflowing, he permitted you to win a beautiful and virtuous wife of noble lineage."

"And allowed glorious daughters to grow up in your famous home," cried little Dr. Eberbach, waving his wineglass enthusiastic-

ally. "Who has not heard of Juliane Peutinger, the youngest of humanists, but no longer one of the least eminent, who, when a child only four years old, addressed the Emperor Maximilian in excellent Latin. But when, as in the child Juliane, the wings of the intellect move so powerfully and so prematurely, who would not think of the words of the superb Ovid:* 'The human mind gains victories more surely than lances and arrows.'"

But, ere he had finished the verse which, like many another Latin one, he mingled with his German words, he noticed Lienhard Groland eagerly motioning to him to stop. The latter knew only too well what had not yet reached the ears of Eberbach in Vienna. The marvellous child, whose precocious learning he had just extolled as a noble gift of Providence to the father, was no longer among the living. Her bright eyes had closed ere she reached maidenhood.

Dr. Eberbach, in painful embarrassment,

* Ovid, Metamorphoses, 3, 54.

tried to apologize for his heedlessness, but the Augsburg city clerk, with a friendly gesture, endeavoured to soothe his young fellow-scholar.

"It brought the true nature of happiness very vividly before all our eyes," he remarked with a faint sigh. "In itself it is not lasting. A second piece of good fortune is needed to maintain the first. Mine was indeed great and beautiful enough—— But we will let the dead rest. What more have you heard concerning the first books of the Annales of Tacitus, said to have been discovered in the Corvey monastery? If the report should be verified——"

Here Eberbach, delighted to find an opportunity to afford the honoured man whom he had unwittingly grieved a little pleasure, eagerly interrupted. Hurriedly thrusting his hand into the breast of his black doublet, he drew forth several small sheets on which he had succeeded in copying the beginning of the precious new manuscript, and handed them to Peutinger, who, with ardent zeal,

instantly became absorbed in the almost illegible characters of his young comrade in learning. Wilibald Pirckheimer and Lienhard Groland also frequently forgot the fresh salmon and young partridges, which were served in succession, to share this brilliant novelty. The Abbot of St. Ægidius, too, showed his pleasure in the fortunate discovery, and did not grow quieter until the conversation turned upon the polemical writing which Reuchlin had just finished. It had recently appeared in Frankfort under the title The Eye Mirror, and assailed with crushing severity those who blamed him for opposing the proposal to destroy the books of the Jews.

"What in the world do we care about the writings of the Hebrews?" the deep bass voice of Hans von Obernitz here interrupted the conversation. "A new Latin manuscript—that I value! But has this noble fragment of Tacitus created half as much stir as this miserable dispute?"

"There is more at stake," said Lienhard Groland positively. "The Jewish writings

merely serve as a pretext for the Cologne inquisitors to attack the great Reuchlin. He, the most profound and keenest student of the noble Greek tongue, who also forced the venerable language in which the Old Testament speaks to discourse to us Germans——"

"The Hebrew!" cried Hans von Obernitz impatiently, passing his napkin over his thick moustache; "what do we want of it? How can a sagacious man plunge into such annoyances on its account?"

"Because the excess of liberty which you gentlemen grant to the human intellect blinds him," observed the abbot. "His learning would throw the doors wide open to heresy. The Scriptures are true. On them Tungern and Kollin, whom you mention, rely. In the original Hebrew text they will be given up to every one who wishes to seek an interpretation——"

"Then a new bridge will be built for truth," declared the little Thuringian with flashing eyes.

"The Cologne theologians hold a different opinion," replied the abbot.

"Because the Grand Inquisitor and his followers—Tungern, Kollin, and whatever the rest may be called—are concerned about something very different from the noblest daughter of Heaven," said Lienhard Groland, and the other gentlemen assented. "You yourself, my lord abbot, admitted to me on the ride here that it angered you, too, to see the Cologne Dominicans pursue the noble scholar 'with such fierce hatred and bitter stings.'" *

"Because conflict between Christians always gives me pain," replied the abbot.

But here Dr. Eberbach impetuously broke in upon the conversation:

"For the sake of a fair woman Ilion suffered unspeakable tortures. But to us a single song of Homer is worth more than all these Hebrew writings. And yet a Trojan war of the intellect has been kindled concerning them. Here freedom of investigation, yonder

* Virgil, Æneid, xi, 837.

with Hoogstraten and Tungern, fettering of the mind. Among us, the ardent yearning to hold aloft the new light which the revival of learning is kindling, yonder superior force is struggling to extinguish it. Here the rule of the thinking mind, in whose scales reason and counter-argument decide the matter; among the Cologne people it is the Grand Inquisitor's jailers, chains, dungeons, and the stake."

"They will not go so far," replied the abbot soothingly. "True, both the front and the back stairs are open to the Dominicans in Rome——"

"Yet where should humanism find more zealous friends than in that very place, among the heads of the Church?" asked Dr. Peutinger. "From the Tiber, I hope——"

Here he paused, for the new guest who had just entered the room attracted his attention also. The landlord of The Blue Pike respectfully preceded him and ushered him directly to the Nuremberg party, while he requested the Dominican monks who accompanied him to wait.

The late arrival was Prof. Arnold von Tungern, dean of the theological faculty at the University of Cologne. This gentleman had just been mentioned with the greatest aversion at the table he was now approaching, and his arrogant manner did little to lessen it.

Nevertheless, his position compelled the Nuremberg dignitaries to invite him to share their meal, which was now drawing to a close. The Cologne theologian accepted the courtesy with a patronizing gesture, as if it were a matter of course. Nay, after he had taken his seat, he ordered the landlord, as if he were the master, to see that this and that thing in the kitchen was not forgotten.

Unwelcome as his presence doubtless was to his table companions, as sympathizers with Reuchlin and other innovators, well as he doubtless remembered their scornful attacks upon his Latin—he was a man to maintain his place. So, with boastful self-conceit, allowing no one else an opportunity to speak, he at once began to complain of the fatigues of the journey and to mention, with tiresome detail,

the eminent persons whom he had met and who had treated him like a valued friend.

The vein on the little doctor's high forehead swelled with wrath as he listened to this boastful chatter, which did not cease until the first dish was served. To brave him, Eberbach turned the conversation to humanism, its redeeming power over minds, and its despicable foes. His scornful jests buzzed around his enemy like a swarm of gnats; but Arnold von Tungern pretended not to hear them. Only now and then a tremor of the mouth, as he slowly chewed his food, or a slight raising of the eye-brows, betrayed that one shaft or another had not wholly missed its mark.

The older gentlemen had sometimes interrupted the Thuringian, to try to change the conversation, but always in vain, and the guest from Cologne vouchsafed them only curt, dry answers.

Not until a pause occurred between two courses did von Tungern alter his manner. Then, like an inquisitor who has succeeded in convicting the person accused, he leaned back

in his chair with a satisfied, long-drawn "So-o," wiped his moist chin, and began:

"You have showed me your state of mind plainly enough, my young Herr Doctor. Your name is Eberbach, if I am not mistaken. We will remember it at a fitting opportunity. But, pugnaciously as your loud voice summons to the strife, it will never destroy the sacred and venerable things which are worthy to endure. Thanks to the foundation of rock which supports them, and the watchfulness of their defenders, they will stand firmer than the walls of Jericho, whose fate you doubtless wish to bestow upon them. But you, my valued friends"—here he turned to the envoys—"who stand at the head of communities whose greatness is founded upon their ancient order and system, beware of opening your ears and your gates to the siren song and fierce outcries of the innovators and agitators."

"Thanks for the counsel," replied Wilibald Pirckheimer, with repellent coldness; but Arnold von Tungern pretended to con-

sider the humanist's reply an assent, and, nodding approvingly, continued:

"How could you help exclaiming, with us and the pagan Ovid,* 'We praise the ancients!' And this is merely saying that what time has tested and made venerable is the best."

Here Doctor Peutinger tried to interrupt him, but the other cut him short with an arrogant wave of the hand, and in an instructive tone began again:

"The honourable Council of Nuremberg —so I am informed—set a praiseworthy example several years ago. There was a youthful member of one of your patrician families —an Ebner, I believe, or a Stromer or Tucher. He had imbibed in Padua mistaken ideas which, unhappily, are held in high esteem by many from whom we should expect more discernment. So it chanced that when he returned home he ventured to contract a formal betrothal with an honourable maiden of noble

* Ovid. Fast., 1, 225.

lineage, against the explicit desire of her distinguished parents. The rebellious youth was therefore summoned before a court of justice, and, on account of his reckless offence and wanton violation of custom and law, banished from the city and sentenced to pay a fine——"

"A punishment which I endured calmly, Herr Professor," interrupted Lienhard Groland, "for I myself was that 'rebellious youth.' Besides, it was by no means the teachings of humanism which led me to an act that you, learned sir, doubtless regard with sterner eyes than the Christian charity which your clerical garb made me expect would permit."

These words fell, with the winning earnestness peculiar to him, from the lips of the young man who, at a time when he cared for no other woman than his new-made bride, had seen in the poor, endangered ropedancer a human being worthy of aid. Only his fiery dark eyes met the professor's sternly enough.

The latter was still seeking a fitting reply, when the folding doors of the room were thrown wide open, and a belated party of

travellers entered. They came opportunely, for they afforded a timely excuse to withhold an answer without attracting notice; yet at the head of the new guests of The Blue Pike was his Cologne colleague Conrad Kollin, who was followed, as he himself had been, by a number of Dominican friars.

Tungern, of course, went to greet him, and this made it easy to part from his table companions in a manner that aroused no comment; for while Kollin was surrounded and respectfully welcomed by the Dominican friars and many other travellers, the humanists left the house.

CHAPTER III.

DIETEL did not lose sight of the envoys. After whispering together a short time they had risen and gone out. At the door the Abbot of St. Ægidius left them to greet Professor Kollin, and, with the easy kindness characteristic of him, to say that the room had become too warm for the other gentlemen. They presented their compliments to the distinguished citizen of Cologne, and placed their table at the service of the newcomer.

Dietel's sharp ears had enabled him to catch these words; but then he was obliged to move again; a table had to be set outside the house for the Nuremberg travellers and their companions, and jugs of wine must be filled for them.

Then he was called back to the taproom. While the landlord of The Pike was serving a fresh meal to Professor Kollin at the table vacated by the Nuremberg dignitaries, and Arnold von Tungern was emptying the full vials of his wrath upon the little doctor and the whole body of humanists, the Nuremberg travellers and their guests were now conversing freely, as if relieved from a nightmare, upon the topics which most deeply interested them.

Dietel would far rather have served the Cologne theologians, whom he regarded as the appointed defenders of the true faith, than the insignificant folk at the other tables who had just finished their meal.

How unmannerly their behaviour was! Better wine had been served before dessert, and they now shouted and sang so loudly and so out of tune that the air played by the strolling musicians could scarcely be distinguished. Many a table, too, groaned under blows from the clinched fist of some excited reveller. Every one seemed animated

by a single desire—to drink again and again.

Now the last pieces of bread and the cloths were removed from the tables. The carousers no longer needed Dietel. He could leave the task of filling the jugs to his young assistants.

What were the envoys outside doing? They were well off. In here the atmosphere was stifling from the fumes emanating from the throng of people, the wine, and the food. It seemed to draw all the flies from far and near. Whence did they come? They seemed to have increased by thousands since the early morning, when the room was empty. The outside air appeared delightful to breathe. He longed to fill his lungs again with the pure wind of heaven, and at the same time catch a few words of the conversation between the envoys to the Reichstag.

So Dietel hobbled to the open window, where the strollers were resting.

Cyriax was lying on the floor asleep, with the brandy bottle in his arms. Two of his

companions, with their mouths wide open, were snoring at his side. Raban, who begged for blood-money, was counting the copper coins which he had received. Red-haired Gitta was sewing another patch of cloth upon her rough husband's already well-mended jerkin by the dim light of a small lamp, into which she had put some fat and a bit of rag for a wick. It was difficult to thread the needle. Had it not been for the yellow blaze of the pitchpans fastened to the wall with iron clamps, which had already been burning an hour, she could scarcely have succeeded.

"Make room there," the waiter called to the vagrants, giving the sleeping Jungel a push with his club foot. The latter grasped his crutch, as he had formerly seized the sword he carried as a foot soldier ere he lost his leg before Padua. Then, with a Spanish oath learned in the Netherlands, he turned over, still half asleep, on his side. So Dietel found room, and, after vainly looking for Kuni among the others, gazed out at the starlit sky.

Yonder, in front of the house, beside the tall oleanders which grew in wine casks cut in halves instead of in tubs, the learned and aristocratic gentlemen sat around the table with outstretched heads, examining by the light of the torches the pages which Dr. Eberbach drew forth, one after another, from the inexhaustible folds of the front of his black robe.

Dietel, the schoolmaster's son, who had once sat on the bench with the pupils of the Latin class, pricked up his ears; he heard foreign words which interested him like echoes of memories of his childhood. He did not understand them, yet he liked to listen, for they made him think of his dead father. He had always meant kindly, but he had been a morose, deeply embittered man. How pitilessly he had flogged him and the other boys with hazel rods. And he would have been still harsher and sterner but for his mother's intercession.

A pleasant smile hovered around his lips as he remembered her. Instead of continu-

ing to listen to the Greek sentences which Herr Wilibald Pirckheimer was reading aloud to the others, he could not help thinking of the pious, gentle little woman who, with her cheerful kindness, so well understood how to comfort and to sustain courage. She never railed or scolded; at the utmost she only wiped her eyes with her apron when the farmers of his little native town in Hesse sent to the schoolmaster, for the school tax, grain too bad for bread, hay too sour for the three goats, and half-starved fowls.

He thoughtfully patted the plump abdomen which, thanks to the fleshpots of The Blue Pike, had grown so rotund in his fifteen years of service.

"It pays better to provide for people's bodies than for their brains," he said to himself. "The Nuremberg and Augsburg gentlemen outside are rich folk's children. For them learning is only the raisins, almonds, and citron in the cake; knowledge agrees with them better than it did with my father. He was

the ninth child of respectable stocking weavers, but, as the pastor perceived that he was gifted with special ability, his parents took a portion of their savings to make him a scholar. The tuition fee and the boy were both confided to a Beanus—that is, an older pupil, who asserted that he understood Latin —in order that he might look after the inexperienced little fellow and help him out of school as well as in. But, instead of using for his *protégé* the florins intrusted to him, the Beanus shamefully squandered the money saved for a beloved child by so many sacrifices. While he feasted on roast meat and wine, the little boy placed in his charge went hungry. Whenever, in after years, the old man described this time of suffering, his son listened with clinched fists, and when Dietel saw a Beanus at The Blue Pike snatch the best pieces from the child in his care, he interfered in his behalf sternly enough. Nay, he probably brought to him from the kitchen, on his own account, a piece of roast meat or a sausage. Many of the names which fell

from the moist lips of the gentlemen outside—Lucian and Virgil, Ovid and Seneca, Homer and Plato—were perfectly familiar to him. The words the little doctor was reading must belong to their writings. How attentively the others listened! Had not Dietel run away from the monks' school at Fulda he, too, might have enjoyed the witticisms of these sages, or even been permitted to sit at the same table with the great lights of the Church from Cologne.

Now it was all over with studying.

And yet—it could not be so very serious a matter, for Doctor Eberbach had just read something aloud at which the young Nuremberg ambassador, Lienhard Groland, could not help laughing heartily. It seemed to amuse the others wonderfully, too, and even caused the astute Dr. Peutinger to strike his clinched fist upon the table with the exclamation, "A devil of a fellow!" and Wilibald Pirckheimer to assent eagerly, praising Hutten's ardent love for his native land and courage in battling for its elevation; but this Hut-

ten whom he so lauded was the ill-advised scion of the knightly race that occupied Castle Steckelberg in his Hessian home, whom he knew well. The state of his purse was evident from the fact that the landlord of The Pike had once been obliged to detain him because he could not pay the bill—though it was by no means large—in any other coin than merry tales.

But even the best joke of the witty knight would have failed to produce its effect on the listening waiter just now; for the gentlemen outside were again discussing the Reuchlin controversy, and in doing so uttered such odious words about the Cologne theologians, whom Dietel knew as godly gentlemen who consumed an ample supply of food, that he grew hot and cold by turns. He was a good man who would not hurt a fly. Yet, when he heard things and opinions which his mother had taught him to hold sacred assailed, he could become as angry as a savage brute. The little impious blasphemer Eberbach, especially, he would have been

more than ready to lash with the best hazel rod which he had ever cut for his dead father. But honest anger affords a certain degree of enjoyment, so it was anything rather than agreeable to him to be called away.

The feather curler and his table companions wanted Kitzing wine, but it was in the cellar, and a trip there would have detained him too long from his post of listener. So he turned angrily back into the room, and told the business men that princes, bishops, and counts were satisfied with the table wine of The Blue Pike, which had been already served to them, and the sceptre and crozier were of more importance than their twisted feathers. "Those are not the wisest people," he added sagely, "who despise what is good to try to get better. So stick to the excellent Blue Pike wine and say no more about it!"

Without waiting for an answer from the astonished guests, he limped back to his window to resume his listening. The conversa-

tion, however, had already taken a new turn, for Dr. Peutinger was describing the Roman monument which he had had put up in the courtyard of his Augsburg house, but, as this interested Dietel very little, he soon turned his attention to the high road, whence a belated guest might still come to The Blue Pike.

The landlady's little kitchen garden lay between it and the river Main, and there—no, it was no deception—there, behind the low hawthorn hedge, a human figure was moving.

One of the vagabonds had certainly slipped into the garden to steal fruit or vegetables, or even honey from the bee-hives. An unprecedented offence! Dietel's blood boiled, for the property of The Blue Pike was as dear to him as his own.

With prompt decision he went through the entry into the yard, where he meant to unchain the butcher's dog to help him chase the abominable robber. But some time was to elapse ere he could execute this praise-worthy intention; for before he could cross

the threshold the landlord of The Pike appeared, berated him, and ordered him to be more civil in the performance of his duties. The words were intended less for the waiter than for the feather dealer and his friends.

The latter had complained of Dietel to the landlord of The Pike, and, after he had received a reproof, they punished him for his rudeness by ordering him to fetch one jug of wine from the cellar after another. At last, when, with many a malediction, he had brought up the fifth, his tormentors released him, but then the best time was lost. Nevertheless he continued the pursuit and entered the little garden with the dog, but the thief had fled.

After assuring himself of this fact he stood still, rubbing his narrow forehead with the tips of his fingers.

The rogue was most probably one of the vagrants, and like a flash it entered his mind that the ropedancer, Kuni, who in her prosperous days, instead of eating meat and vegetables, preferred to satisfy her appetite with

fruits and sweet dainties, might be the culprit. Besides, when he had looked around among the guests just before, she was no longer with the other vagabonds.

Certain of having found the right trail, he instantly went to the window below which the strollers lay, thrust his head into the room from the outside, and waked the wife of the tongueless swearer. She had fallen asleep on the floor with the sewing in her hand. The terror with which she started up at his call bore no favourable testimony to her good conscience, but she had already recovered her bold unconcern when he imperiously demanded to know what had become of lame Kuni.

"Ask the other travellers—the soldiers, the musicians, the monks, for aught I care," was the scornful, irritating answer. But when Dietel angrily forbade such insolent mockery, she cried jeeringly:

"Do you think men don't care for her because she has lost her foot and has that little cough? You ought to know better.

Master Dietel has a sweetheart for every finger, though the lower part of his own body isn't quite as handsome as it might be."

"On account of my foot?" the waiter answered spitefully. "You'll soon find that it knows how to chase. Besides, the Nuremberg city soldiers will help me in the search. If you don't tell me at once where the girl went—by St. Eoban, my patron——"

Here red-haired Gitta interrupted him in a totally different tone; she and her companions had nothing good to expect from the city soldiers.

In a very humble manner she protested that Kuni was an extraordinarily charitable creature. In a cart standing in the meadow by the highroad lay the widow of a beggar, Nickel, whom the peasants had hung on account of many a swindling trick. A goose and some chickens had strayed off to his premises. The woman had just given birth to twins when Nickel was hung, and she was now in a violent fever, with frequent attacks of convulsions, and yet had to nurse the

infants. The landlady of The Pike had sent her some broth and a little milk for the children. As for Kuni, she had gone to carry some linen from her own scanty store to the two babies, who were as naked as little frogs. He would find her with the sick mother.

All this flowed from Gitta's lips with so much confidence that Dietel, whose heart was easily touched by such a deed of charity, though he by no means put full confidence in her, allowed himself to be induced to let the city soldiers alone for the present and test the truth of her strange statement himself.

So he prepared to go in search of the cart, but the landlord of The Pike met him at the door, and, angrily asking what ailed him that day, ordered him to fetch the Erbach, more of which was wanted inside. Dietel went down into the cellar again, but this time he was not to leave it so speedily, for the apprentice of a Nuremberg master shoemaker, whose employer was going to the

Frankfort fair with his goods, and who made common cause with the feather dealer, stole after Dietel, and of his own volition, for his own pleasure, locked him in. The good Kitzing wine had strengthened his courage. Besides, experience taught him that an offence would be more easily pardoned the more his master himself disliked the person against whom it was committed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ropedancer, Kuni, really had been with the sick mother and her babes, and had toiled for them with the utmost diligence.

The unfortunate woman was in great distress.

The man who had promised to take her in his cart to her native village of Schweinfurt barely supported himself and his family by the tricks of his trained poodles. He made them perform their very best feats in the taverns, under the village lindens, and at the fairs. But the children who gazed at the four-footed artists, though they never failed to give hearty applause, frequently paid in no other coin. He would gladly have helped the unfortunate woman, but to maintain the

wretched mother and her twins imposed too heavy a burden upon the kind-hearted vagabond, and he had withdrawn his aid.

Then the ropedancer met her. True, she herself was in danger of being left lying by the wayside; but she was alone, and the mother had her children. These were two budding hopes, while she had nothing more to expect save the end—the sooner the better. There could be no new happiness for her.

And yet, to have found some one who was even more needy than she, lifted her out of herself, and to have power to be and do something in her behalf pleased her, nay, even roused an emotion akin to that which, in better days, she had felt over a piece of good fortune which others envied. Perhaps she herself might be destined to die on the highway, without consolation, the very next day; but she could save this unhappy woman from it, and render her end easier. Oh, how rich Lienhard's gold coins made her! Yet if, instead of three, there had been as many dozens, she would have placed the larger portion in

the twins' pillows. How it must soothe their mother's heart! Each one was a defence against hunger and want. Besides, the gold had been fairly burning her hand. It came from Lienhard. Had it not been for Cyriax and the crowd of people in the room, she would have made him take it back—she alone knew why.

How did this happen?

Why did every fibre of her being rebel against receiving even the smallest trifle from the man to whom she would gladly have given the whole world? Why, after she had summoned up courage and approached Lienhard to restore his gift, had she felt such keen resentment and bitter suffering when the landlord of The Blue Pike stopped her?

As she now seized his gold, it seemed as though she saw Lienhard before her. She had already told Cyriax how she met the aristocratic Nuremberg patrician, a member of the ancient and noble Groland family, whom his native city had now made an ambassador so young. But what secret-

ly bound her to him had never passed her lips.

Once in her life she had felt something which placed her upon an equal footing with the best and purest of her sex—a great love for one from whom she asked nothing, nothing at all, save to be permitted to think of him and to sacrifice everything, everything for him—even life. So strange had been the course of this love, that people would have doubted her sanity or her truthfulness had she described it to them.

While standing before St. Sebald's church in Nuremberg, the vision of the young Councillor's bride at first made a far stronger impression upon her mind than his own. Then her gaze rested on Lienhard. As he had chosen the fairest of women, the bride had also selected the tallest, most stately, and certainly the best and wisest of men. During her imprisonment the image of this rare couple had been constantly before her. Not until, through the young husband's intercession, she had regained her liberty, after he

prevented her kissing his hand and, to soothe her, had stroked her hair and cheeks in the magistrate's room, did the most ardent gratitude take possession of her soul. From this emotion, which filled heart and mind, a glowing wealth of other feelings had blossomed like buds upon a rosebush. Everything in her nature had attracted her toward him, and the desire to devote herself to him, body and soul, shed the last drop of blood in her heart for him, completely ruled her. His image rose before her day and night, sometimes alone, sometimes with his beautiful bride. Not only to him, but to her also she would joyfully have rendered the most menial service, merely to be near them and to be permitted to show that the desire to prove her gratitude had become the object of her life.

When, with good counsel for the future, he dismissed her from the chief magistrate's room, he had asked her where she was to be found in case he should have anything to say to her. It seemed as though, from mingled

alarm and joy, her heart would stop beating. If her lodgings, instead of an insignificant tavern, had been her own palace, she would gladly have opened all its gates to him, yet a feverish thrill ran through her limbs at the thought that he might seek her among her vagabond companions, and ask in return for his kindness what he would never have presumed to seek had she been the child of reputable parents, yet which, with mingled anger and happiness, she resolved not to refuse.

During the day and the night when she expected his visit, she had become aware that she, who had never cared for any man save for the gifts he bestowed, was fired with love for Lienhard. Such ardent yearning could torture only a loving heart, yet what she felt was very unlike the love with which she was familiar in songs, and had seen in other girls; for she by no means thought with jealous rancour of the woman to whom he belonged, body and soul—his beautiful wife. It rather seemed to her that she was

his, and he would no longer be the same if he were separated from her, nay, as if her very love was hers also. When she heard a noise outside of her little room she started, and eagerly as she yearned to see him, blissful as she thought it must be to sink upon his breast and offer him her lips to kiss, the bold ropedancer, who never cared for the opinions of others, could not shake off, even for a moment, the fear of wronging the fair wife who had a better right to him. Instead of hating her, or even wishing to share the heart of the man she loved with his bride, she shrank from the approaching necessity of clouding her young happiness as though it were the direst misfortune. Yet she felt that its prevention lay, not in her own hands, but in those of Fate. Should it please Destiny to lead Lienhard to her and inspire him with a desire for her love, all resistance, she knew, would be futile. So she began to repeat several paternosters that he might remain away from her. But her yearning was so great that she soon desisted, and again and

again went to the window with a fervent wish that he might come.

In the terrible tumult of her heart she had forgotten to eat or to drink since early morning, and at last, in the afternoon, some one knocked at the door, and the landlady called her.

While she was hurriedly smoothing her thick black hair and straightening her best gown, which she had put on for him in the morning, she heard the hostess say that Herr Groland of the Council was waiting for her downstairs. Every drop of blood left her glowing cheeks, and the knees which never trembled on the rope shook as she descended the narrow steps.

He came forward to meet her in the entry, holding out his hand with open-hearted frankness. How handsome and how good he was! No one wore that look who desired aught which must be hidden under the veil of darkness. Ere her excited blood had time to cool, he had beckoned to her to follow him into the street, where a sedan chair was standing.

An elderly lady of dignified bearing looked out and met her eyes with a pleasant glance.

It was Frau Sophia, the widow of Herr Conrad Schürstab of the Council, one of the richest and most aristocratic noblewomen in the city. Lienhard had told her about the charming prisoner who had been released and begged her to help him bring her back to a respectable and orderly life. The lady needed an assistant who, now that it was hard for her to stoop, would inspect the linen closets, manage the poultry yard—her pride—and keep an eye on the children when they came to visit their grandmother. So she instantly accompanied Lienhard to the tavern, and Kuni pleased her. But it would have been difficult not to feel some degree of sympathy for the charming young creature who, in great embarrassment, yet joyously as though released from a heavy burden, raised her large blue eyes to the kind stranger.

It was cold in the street, and as Kuni had come out without any wrap, Frau Schürstab, in her friendly consideration, shortened the

conference. Lienhard Groland had helped her with a few words, and when the sedan chair and the young Councillor moved down the street all the necessary details were settled. The vagrant had bound herself and assumed duties, though they were very light ones. She was to move that evening into the distinguished widow's house, not as a servant, but as the old lady's assistant.

Loni, the manager of the company of rope-dancers, had watched the negotiations from the taproom. During their progress each of the three windows was filled with heads, but no one had been able to hear what was whispered in the street. Just as the curious spectators were hoping that now they might perhaps guess what the aristocratic lady wanted with Kuni, the sedan chair began to move, and the young girl entered the hot room to tell Loni that she would leave the company that day forever.

"In-de-e-ed?" Loni asked in astonishment, lifting the gold circlet which rested on his head. Then he passed his hand through the

coal-black hair which, parted in the middle, fell in smooth strands upon his neck, and exerted all his powers of persuasion to convince her of the folly of her plan. After his arguments were exhausted he raised his voice louder. As usual, when excited by anger, he swung his lower right arm to and fro, feeling the prominent muscles with his left hand. But Kuni remained resolute, and when he at last perceived that his opposition only increased her obstinacy, he exclaimed:

"Then rush on to your destruction! The day will come when you will see where you belong. If only it doesn't arrive too late. A man grows twelve and a woman thirty-six months older every year."

With these words he turned his back upon her, and the clown brought the amount of wages which was due.

Many an eye grew dim with tears when Kuni bade farewell to her companions. Shortly after sunset she was welcomed to Frau Schürstab's house.

The first greeting was friendly, and she

received nothing but kindness and indulgent treatment afterward. She had a sunny chamber of her own, and how large and soft her bed was! But while, when on the road with Loni's band, if they could reach no town, she had often slept soundly and sweetly on a heap of straw, here she spent one restless night after another.

During the first a series of questions disturbed her slumber. Was it really only the desire to take her from her vagabond life which had induced Lienhard to open this house to her? Did he not perhaps also cherish the wish to keep her near him? He had certainly come to her with Frau Schürstab to protect her reputation. Had it not been so he might have left the matron at home; for Loni and everybody in the company knew that she never troubled herself about gossip. Last year she had obtained a leave of absence from Loni, who was making a tour of the little Frank towns, and spent the carnival season in revelry with a sergeant of the Nurembreg soldiers. When the booty he

had gained in Italy was squandered, she gave him his dismissal. Her reputation among her companions was neither better nor worse than that of the other strolling players who, like her, were born on the highway, yet she was glad that Lienhard had tried to spare her. Or had he only come with the old noblewoman on account of his own fair fame?

Perhaps—her pulses again throbbed faster at the thought—he had not ventured to come alone because some feeling for her stirred in his own heart, and, spite of his beautiful young wife, he did not feel safe from her. Then Frau Schürstab was to serve as a shield. This conjecture flattered her vanity and reconciled her to the step which she had taken and already began to regret.

But suppose he really felt no more for her than the forester who finds a child lost in the woods, and guides it into the right path? How would she endure that? Yet, were it otherwise, if he was like the rest of men, if he profited by what her whole manner must betray to him, how should she face his wife,

who undoubtedly would soon come to call on her aunt?

All these questions roused a tumult of unprecedented violence in her young, ardent, inexperienced soul, which was renewed each successive night. It became more and more difficult for her to understand why she had left Loni's band and entered into relations for which she was not suited, and in which she could never, never be at ease or feel happy.

Nothing was lacking in this wealthy household, not even kindness and love. Frau Sophia was indulgent and friendly, even when Kuni, whose heart and brain were occupied with so many other thoughts, neglected or forgot anything. The matron's grandchildren, of whom she often had charge, soon became warmly attached to her. While among the ropedancers she had been fond of children, and many a little one who journeyed with the band held out its arms to her more joyously than to its own mother. There was something in her nature that attracted them. Besides, her skilful hands

could show them many a rare trick, and she could sing numerous songs new to the Schürstab boys and girls, which she had picked up here and there. Then, too, she permitted many a prank which no one else would have allowed. Her duties connected with the household linen and the poultry yard, its owner's pride, were so easily performed, that in her leisure hours she often voluntarily helped the housekeeper. At first the latter eyed her askance, but she soon won her affection. Both she and her mistress showed her as much attention as the gardener bestows upon a wild plant which he has transferred to good soil, where it thrives under his care.

She kept aloof from the servants, and neither man nor maid molested her. Perhaps this was due to foolish arrogance, for after they had learned from rumour that Kuni had danced on the tight rope, they considered themselves far superior. The younger maids timidly kept out of her way, and Kuni surpassed them in pride and looked

down upon *them*, because her free artist blood rebelled against placing herself on the plane of a servitor. She did not vouchsafe them a word, yet neither did she allow any of them to render her even the most trivial service. But she could not escape Seifried, the equerry of her mistress's eldest son. At first, according to her custom, she had roused the handsome fellow's hopes by fiery glances which she could not restrain. Now he felt that she cared for him, and in his honest fashion offered to make her his beloved wife; but she refused his suit, at first kindly, then angrily. As he still persisted she begged the housekeeper, though she saw that match-making was her delight, to keep him away.

Even in March Frau Sophia thanked Lienhard for the new inmate of her household, who far exceeded her expectations. In April her praise became still warmer, only she regretted that Kuni's pretty face was losing its fresh colour and her well-formed figure its roundness. She was sorry, too, that she so often seemed lost in thought, and

appeared less merry while playing with the children.

Lienhard and his young wife excused the girl's manner. Comfortable as she was now, she was still a prisoned bird. It would be unnatural, nay, suspicious, if she did not sometimes long for the old freedom and her former companions. She would also remember at times the applause of the multitude. The well-known Loni, her former employer, had besought him to win her back to his company, complaining loudly of her loss, because it was difficult to replace her with an equally skilful young artist. It was now evident how mistaken the juggler had been when he asserted that Kuni, who was born among vagrants, would never live in a respectable family. He, Lienhard, had great pleasure in knowing that the girl, on the road to ruin, had been saved by Frau Sophia's goodness.

Lienhard's father had died shortly after Kuni entered her new home. Every impulse to love dalliance, she felt, must shrink

before this great sorrow. The idea sustained her hopes. She could not expect him to seek her again until the first bitterness of grief for the loss of this beloved relative had passed away. She could wait, and she succeeded in doing so patiently.

But week after week went by and there was no change in his conduct. Then a great anxiety overpowered her, and this did not escape his notice; for one day, while his young wife hung on his arm and added a few brief words of sympathy, he asked Kuni if she was ill or if she needed anything; but she answered curtly in the negative and hurried into the garden, where the children, with merry shouts, were helping the gardener to free the beds of crocuses and budding tulips from the pine boughs which had protected them from the frosts of winter.

Another sleepless night followed this incident. It was useless to deceive herself. She might as well mistake black for white as to believe that Lienhard cared for her. To no one save his fair young wife would he grant

even the smallest ray of the love of which he was doubtless capable, and in which she beheld the sun that dispensed life and light. She had learned this, for he had often met her in Frau Sophia's house since his father's funeral. The child of the highway had never been taught to conceal her feelings and maintain timid reserve. Her eyes had told him eloquently enough, first her deep sympathy, and afterward the emotions which so passionately stirred her heart. Had the feelings which her glances were intended to reveal passed merely for the ardent gratitude of an impassioned soul?

Gratitude! For what?

His lukewarm interest had tempted her from a free, gay life, full of constant excitement, into the oppressive, wearisome monotony of this quiet house, where she was dying of ennui. How narrow, how petty, how tiresome everything seemed, and what she had bartered for it was the world, the whole wide, wide world. As the chicken lured the fox, the hope of satisfying the fervent longing of her

heart, though even once and for a few brief moments, had brought her into the snare. But the fire which burned within had not been extinguished. An icy wind had fanned the flames till they blazed higher and higher, threatening her destruction.

Frau Schürstab had made her attend church and go to the confessional. But the mass, whose meaning she did not understand, offered no solace to the soul which yearned for love alone. Besides, it wearied her to remain so long in the same place, and the confession forced the girl, who had never shrunk from honestly expressing what she felt, into deception. The priest to whom she was taken was a frequent visitor at the Schürstab house, and she would have died ere she would have confided to him the secret of her heart. Besides, to her the feeling which animated her was no sin. She had not summoned it. It had taken possession of her against her will and harmed no one except herself, not even the wife who was so sure of her husband. How could she have presumed to

dispute with her the possession of Herr Lienhard's love? Yet it seemed an insult that Frau Katharina had no fear that she could menace her happiness. Could the former know that Kuni would have been content with so little—a tender impulse of his heart, a kiss, a hasty embrace? That would do the other no injury. In the circles whence she had been brought no one grudged another such things. How little, she thought, would have been taken from the wealthy Katharina by the trifling gift which would have restored to her happiness and peace. The fact that Lienhard, though he never failed to notice her, would not understand, and always maintained the same pleasant, aristocratic reserve of manner, she sometimes attributed to fear, sometimes to cruelty, sometimes to arrogance; she would not believe that he saw in her only a person otherwise indifferent to him, whom he wished to accustom to the mode of life which he and his friends believed to be the right path, pleasing in the sight of God. Love, feminine vanity, the

need of approval, her own pride—all opposed this view.

When the last snow of winter had melted, and the spring sunshine of April was unfolding the green leafage and opening bright flowers in the meadows, the hedges, the woods, and the gardens, she found the new home which she had entered during the frosts of February, and whose solid walls excluded every breath of air, more and more unendurable. A gnawing feeling of home-sickness for the free out-of-door life, the wandering from place to place, the careless, untrammelled people to whom she belonged, took possession of her. She felt as though everything which surrounded her was too small, the house, the apartments, her own chamber, nay, her very clothing. Only the hope of the first token that Lienhard was not so cold and unconquerable as he seemed, that she would at last constrain him to pass the barrier which separated them, still detained her.

Then came the day when, to avoid an-

swering his question whether she needed anything, she had gone into the garden. Before reaching the children, who were playing among the crocuses and tulips, she had said to herself that she must leave this house—it was foolish, nay mad, to continue to cherish the hope which had brought her hither. She would suffer keenly in tearing it from her heart, but a wild delight seized her at the thought that this imprisonment would soon be over, that she would be free once more, entirely her own mistress, released from every restraint and consideration. How rapturous was the idea that she would soon be roving through the fields and woods again with gay, reckless companions! Was there anything more pleasurable than to forget herself, and devote her whole soul to the execution of some difficult and dangerous feat, to attract a thousand eyes by her bewitching grace, and, sustained by her enthusiasm, force a thousand hearts to throb anxiously and give loud applause as she flew over the rope?

Never had the children seen her more extravagantly gay than after her resolve to leave them. Yet when, at a late hour, Kuni went to bed, the old housekeeper heard her weeping so piteously in her chamber that she rose to ask what had happened. But the girl did not even open her door, and declared that she had probably had the nightmare.

During the next few days she sometimes appeared more cheerful and docile, sometimes more dull and troubled than her household companions had ever seen her. Frau Schürstab shook her head over her *protégée's* varying moods. But when the month of May began, and Lienhard told his aunt that Loni, who had only remained in Nuremberg during Lent to spend the time when all public performances were prohibited, had applied to the Council for permission to give exhibitions with his company Easter week in the Haller Meadows, the matron was troubled about her *protégée's* peace of mind. Her nephew had had the same thought, and advised her to move to her country estate, that Kuni might

see and hear nothing of the jugglers; but she had noticed the clown with other members of the company, as they passed through the streets on foot and mounted on horses and donkeys, inviting the people, with blare of trumpets and beating of drums, to witness the wonderful feats which Loni's famous band of artists would perform.

Then Kuni packed her bundle. But when she heard the next morning that, before going to the country, Frau Schürstab would attend the christening of her youngest grandson, and spend the whole day with the daughter who was the little boy's mother, she untied it.

One sunny May morning she was left alone, as she had expected. She could not be invited to the ceremony with the other guests, and she would not join the servants. The housekeeper and most of the men and maids had accompanied their mistress to help in the kitchen and to wait upon the visitors. Deep silence reigned throughout the great empty house, but Kuni's heart had

never throbbed so loudly. If Lienhard came now, her fate would be decided, and she knew that he must come. Just before noon, he really did rap with the knocker on the outer door. He wanted the christening gift, which Frau Schürstab had forgotten to take for the infant. The money was in the chest in the matron's room. Kuni led the way. The house seemed to reel around her as she went up the stairs behind him. The next moment, she felt, must decide her destiny.

Now he laid his hand upon the door-knob, now he opened the door. The widow's chamber was before her. Thick silk curtains shut out the bright May sunshine from the quiet room. How warm and pleasant it was!

She already saw herself in imagination kneeling by his side before the chest to help him search. While doing so, his fingers might touch hers, perhaps her hair might brush against his. But, instead of entering, he turned to her with careless unconcern, saying:

"It is fortunate that I have found you alone. Will you do me a favour, girl?"

He had intended to ask her to help him prepare a surprise for his aunt. The day after to-morrow was Frau Sophia Schürstab's birthday. Early in the morning she must find among her feathered favourites a pair of rare India fowls, which he had received from Venice.

As Kuni did not instantly assent, because the wild tumult of her blood paralyzed her tongue, he noticed her confusion, and in an encouraging tone, gaily continued:

"What I have to ask is not too difficult."

As he spoke he passed his hand kindly over her dark hair, just as he had done a few months before in the Town Hall.

Then the blood mounted to her brain. Clasping his right hand, beneath whose touch she had just trembled, in both her own, she passionately exclaimed:

"Ask whatever you desire. If you wanted to trample my heart under your feet, I would not stir."

A look of ardent love from her sparkling blue eyes accompanied the words; but he had withdrawn his hand in astonishment, and raised a lofty barrier between them by answering coldly and sternly, "Keep the heart and your dainty self for the equerry Seifried, who is an honest man."

The advice, and the lofty austerity with which it was given, pierced Kuni like the thrust of a dagger. Yet she succeeded in controlling herself, and, without a word in reply, preceded the harsh man into the sleeping room and silently, tearlessly, pointed to the chest. When he had taken out the money, she bowed hastily and ran down the stairs.

Probably she heard him call her name more than three times; doubtless, afterward, she fancied that she remembered how his voice had sounded in beseeching, tender, at last even imperious tones through the empty corridors; but she did not turn, and hurried into her room.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN, on the evening of the christening day, Lienhard accompanied his aunt home, Kuni was nowhere to be found. Frau Sophia discovered in her chamber every article of clothing which she had obtained for her, even the beaver cap, the prayer-book, and the rosary which she had given. The young burgomaster, at her request, went to the manager of the ropedancers, Loni, the next morning, but the latter asserted that he knew nothing about the girl. The truth was that he had sent her to Würzburg with part of his company.

From that time she had remained with the ropedancers. At first the master had watched her carefully, that she might not run away again. But he soon perceived this

to be unnecessary; for he had never found any member of the company more zealous, or seen one make more progress in the art. Now the only point was to keep her out of the way of other ropedancers, English proprietors of circus companies, as well as the numerous knights and gentlemen who tried to take her from him. Her name had become famous. When the crier proclaimed that the "flying maiden" would ascend the rope to the steeple, Loni was sure of a great crowd of spectators. Among her own profession she had obtained the nickname of crazy Kuni.

Yet even at that time, and in the midst of the freest intercourse with German, Spanish, and other officers in Flanders and Brabant, young knights and light-hearted priests on the Rhine, the Main, the Danube, the Weser, and the Elbe, whose purses the pretty, vivacious girl, with the shining raven hair and bright blue eyes, the mistress of her art, seemed to their owners worthy to empty, she had by no means forgotten Lienhard. This

wrought mischief to many a gay gentleman of aristocratic lineage in the great imperial and commercial cities; for it afforded Kuni special pleasure to try her power upon Lienhard's equals in rank. When she went on with the company, more than one patrician had good reason to remember her with regret; for she, who shared the lion's portion of her earnings with her companions or flung it to the poor, was insatiably avaricious toward these admirers.

The weaker she found many of them, the higher, in her opinion, rose the image of him who had made her feel his manly strength of resistance so cruelly. His stern, inexorable nature seemed to her worthy of hate, yet for three whole years the longing for him scarcely left her heart at peace an hour.

During this whole period she had not met him. Not until after she had come to Augsburg, where Loni's company was to give several performances before the assembled Reichstag, did she see him again. Once she even succeeded in attracting his gaze, and

this was done in a way which afforded her great satisfaction. His beautiful wife, clad in costly velvet robes, was walking by his side with eyes decorously downcast; but he had surely recognised her—there was no doubt of that. Yet he omitted to inform his wife, even by a look, whom he had met here. Kuni watched the proud couple a long time, and, with the keen insight of a loving heart, told herself that he would have pointed her out to Frau Katharina, if he did not remember her in some way—either in kindness or in anger.

This little discovery had sufficed to transfigure, as it were, the rest of the day, and awaken a throng of new hopes and questions.

Even now she did not desire to win Frau Katharina's husband from her. She freely acknowledged that the other's beauty was tenfold greater than her own; but whether the gifts of love which the woman with the cloudless, aristocratic composure could offer to her husband were not like the beggar's pence, compared with the overflowing treasure of ardent passion which she cherished for Lien-

hard, was a question to which she believed there could be but a single answer. Was this lady, restricted by a thousand petty scruples, as well as by her stiff, heavy gala robes, a genuine woman at all? Ah! if he would only for once cast aside the foolish considerations which prevented him also from being a genuine man, clasp her, whom he knew was his own, in his arms, and hold her as long as he desired, he should learn what a strong, free, fearless woman, whose pliant limbs were as unfettered as her heart, could bestow upon him to whom she gave all the love that she possessed! And he must want something of her which was to be concealed from the wife. She could not be mistaken. She had never been deceived in a presentiment that was so positive. Ever since she reached Augsburg, an inner voice had told her—and old Brigitta's cards confirmed it—that the destiny of her life would be decided here, and he alone held her weal and woe in his hand.

Yet she had misinterpreted his conduct to his wife. In spite of the finery which Kuni

owed to the generosity of the Knight of Neckerfels, who was then a suitor for her favour, Lienhard had recognised her. The sight recalled their last meeting and its painful termination, and therefore he had omitted to attract Frau Katharina's attention to her immediately. But, ere Kuni disappeared, he had repaired the oversight, and both desired to ascertain the fate of their former charge. True, the wish could not be instantly fulfilled, for Lienhard's time and strength were wholly claimed by the mission intrusted to him by the Emperor and the Council.

The next afternoon Kuni ascended the rope to the steeple in the presence of many princes and dignitaries. Firmly as ever she moved along the rope stretched through the wooden stay behind her, holding the balancing pole as she went. The clapping of hands and shouts of applause with which the crowd greeted "the flying maiden" led her to kiss her hand to the right and the left, and bow to the stand which had been erected for the crowned heads, counts, nobles, and their wives. In doing so,

she looked down at the aristocratic spectators to ascertain whether the Emperor and one other were among them. In spite of the height of the topmost window of the steeple where she stood, her keen eyes showed her that Maximilian's seat was still vacant. As it was hung with purple draperies and richly garlanded, the monarch was evidently expected. This pleased her, and her heart throbbed faster as she saw on the stand all the nobles who were entitled to admittance to the lists of a tournament, and, in the front row, the man whose presence she most desired. At Lienhard's right sat his dazzlingly beautiful wife, adorned with plumes and the most superb gold ornaments; at his left was a maiden of extremely peculiar charm. According to years she was still a child, but her delicate, mobile features had a mature expression, which sometimes gave her a precocious air of superiority. The cut of her white robe and the little laurel wreath on her brown curls reminded Kuni of the pagan Genius on an ancient work of marble which she had seen in

Verona. Neither the girl's age nor her light, airy costume harmonized with her surroundings; for the maids and matrons near her were all far beyond childhood, and wore the richest holiday costumes of heavy brocades and velvets. The huge puffs on the upper part of the sleeves touched the cheeks of many of the wearers, and the lace ruffs on the stiff collars rendered it easy, it is true, to maintain their aristocratic, haughty dignity, but prevented any free, swift movement.

The young girl who, as Kuni afterward learned, was the daughter of Conrad Peutinger, of Augsburg, whom she had again seen that day in The Blue Pike, was then eleven years old. She was sometimes thought to be fifteen or even sixteen; her mobile face did not retain the same expression a single instant. When the smile which gave her a childlike appearance vanished, and any earnest feeling stirred her soul, she really resembled a mature maiden. What a brilliant, versatile intellect must animate this remarkable creature! Lienhard, shrewd and highly

educated as he was, seemed to be completely absorbed in his neighbour; nay, in his animated conversation with her he entirely forgot the beautiful wife at his side; at least, while Kuni looked down at him, he did not bestow a single glance upon her. Now he shook his finger mischievously at the child, but he seemed to be seeking, in mingled amusement and perplexity, to find a fitting answer. And how brightly Lienhard's eyes sparkled as he fairly hung upon the sweet red lips of the little marvel at his left—the heart side! A few minutes had sufficed to show the ropedancer all this, and suggest the question whether it was possible that the most faithful of husbands would thus basely neglect, for the sake of a child, the young wife whom he had won in spite of the hardest obstacles, on whose account he had so coldly and cruelly rejected her, the object of so much wooing, and who, this very day, was the fairest of all the beautiful ladies who surrounded her.

In an instant her active mind transported her to the soul of the hitherto favoured wife

of the man whom she loved, and her strangely constituted woman's heart filled with resentment against the young creature below, who had not even attained womanhood, and yet seemed to gain, without effort, the prize for which she had vainly striven with painful longing.

She, whose heart had remained free from jealousy of the woman who stood between her and the man she loved, like a solid bulwark erected by Fate itself, was now suddenly overmastered by this passion.

Yet she did not turn against the person to whom Lienhard belonged, as he did to the city, or to his own family, and who was united to him by the will of Heaven, but against the mysterious young creature at his side, who changed with every passing moment.

This child—no, this maiden—must be a being of some special nature. Like the sirens of whom she had heard, she possessed the mysterious, enviable power of conquering the iron resistance of even the strongest man.

Like a flash of lightning, Kuni, whose

kind heart cherished resentment against few and wished no one any evil, suddenly felt an ardent desire to drive the little witch from Lienhard's side, even by force, if necessary. Had she held a thunderbolt instead of a balance pole, she would gladly have struck down the treacherous child from her height—not only because this enchantress had so quickly won that for which she had vainly yearned, alas! how long, but because it pierced her very heart to see Frau Katharina's happiness clouded, nay, perhaps destroyed. A bitterness usually alien to her light, gay nature had taken possession of her, as, with the last glance she cast at Lienhard, she saw him bend low over the child and, with fiery ardour, whisper something which transformed the delicate pink flush in her cheeks to the hue of the poppy.

Yes, the ropedancer was jealous of the laurel-crowned child. She, who cared so little for law and duty, virtue and morality, now felt offended, wounded, tortured by Lienhard's conduct. But there was no time to ponder

over the reason now. She had already delayed too long ere moving forward.

Yet even calm reflection would not have revealed the right answer to the problem. How could she have suspected that what stirred her passionate soul so fiercely was grief at the sight of the man whom she had regarded as the stronghold of integrity, the possessor of the firmest will, the soul of inviolable fidelity, succumbing here, before the eyes of all, like a dissolute weakling, to the seductive arts of an immature kobold? These two, who gave to her, the orphaned vagrant, surrounded by unbridled recklessness, physical and mental misery, a proof that there was still in marriage real love and a happiness secure from every assault, were now, before her eyes, placing themselves on the same plane with the miserable couples whom she met everywhere. She could not have expressed her emotions in words, but she vaguely felt that the world had become poorer, and that henceforth she must think of something more trivial when she tried to

imagine the pure happiness which mortals are permitted to enjoy. She had seen the blossoms stripped from the scanty remnant of her faith in truth and goodness, which had begun to bloom afresh in her heart through the characters of this pair whose marriage procession she had watched.

Loni had been beckoning a long time; now he waved his gay handkerchief still more impatiently, and she moved on.

Her lips forced themselves into the customary smile with difficulty. Tripping forward was an easy matter for one so free from dizziness. She only carried the pole because it was customary to begin with the least difficult feats. Yet, while gracefully placing one foot before the other, she said to herself—safe as she felt—that, while so much agitated, she would be wiser not to look down again into the depths below. She did avoid it, and with a swift run gained the end of the rope without effort, and went up and down it a second time.

While, on reaching the end of her walk,

she was chalking her soles again, the applause which had accompanied her during her dangerous pilgrimage still rose to her ears, and came most loudly of all from the stand where Lienhard sat among the distinguished spectators. He, too, had clapped his hands lustily, and shouted, "Bravo!" Never had he beheld any ropedancer display so much grace, strength, and daring. His modest *protégée* had become a magnificently developed woman. How could he have imagined that the unfortunate young creature whom he had saved from disgrace would show such courage, such rare skill?

He confided his feelings, and the fact that he knew the artist, to his young neighbour, but she had turned deadly pale and lowered her eyes. While looking on she had felt as though she herself was in danger of falling into the depths. Giddiness had seized her, and her heart, whose tendency to disease had long awakened the apprehension of the physicians, contracted convulsively. The sight of a fellow-being hovering in mortal peril

above her head seemed unendurable. Not until she followed Lienhard's advice and avoided looking up, did she regain her calmness. Her changeful temperament soon recovered its former cheerfulness, and the friend at her side to whom the lovely child, with her precocious mental development, appeared like the fairest marvel, took care, often as he himself looked upward, that she should be guarded from a second attack of weakness.

The storm of applause from below, in which Lienhard also joined, fanned the flames of desire for admiration in Kuni's breast to a fiery glow. She would show *him*, too, what she could do—compel him to applaud her. She would force him away from the little temptress, and oblige him to gaze up at her whose art—she learned this daily—possessed the power to fix the attention of spectators like the thrall of the basilisk's eye. When on the rope she was no insignificant personage. He should tremble for her as did the gray-haired, scarred captain of the foot soldiers, Manns-

bach, the day before yesterday. He had told her that his heart had throbbed more anxiously during her daring feats than on the bloodiest field of battle.

She moved forward more swiftly to the time of the lively dancing tune which the city pipers were playing. Midway along the rope she turned, ran back to the cross-shaped trestle at the steeple window, handed the balancing pole to Loni, and received a cage filled with doves. Each one bore around its neck a note containing an expression of homage to the Emperor Maximilian, and they were all trained to alight near the richly decorated throne which was now occupied by the chivalrous monarch. The clown who, with a comical show of respect, offered her what she needed for her next feat, told her this.

Loni, sure of being heard by no unbidden ear, called to her from the window:

"Art is honoured to-day, my girl."

The clown added jocosely:

"Who else was ever permitted to walk

over the anointed head of our lord the Emperor?"

But Kuni would not have needed such encouragement. Doubtless she felt flattered by the consciousness of attracting even the sovereign's glance, but what she intended to do immediately was for the purpose of compelling another person to watch her steps with fear and admiration. Crossing her feet, she threw back her garlanded head and drew a long breath. Then she hastily straightened herself, and with the bird cage in one hand and the winged staff of Mercury, which the clown had handed to her, in the other, she advanced to the centre of the rope. There she opened the cage as steadily as if she had been standing on the floor of her own room. The birds fluttered through the little door and went, with a swift flight, directly to their goal. Then, below and beside her, from every place occupied by spectators, and from hundreds of windows, rose thunders of applause; but it seemed to her as if the roaring of the surging sea was in her ears. Her

heart throbbed under her pink silk bodice like an iron hammer, and in the proud consciousness of having probably attained already what she desired, and, besides thousands of other eyes, fixed Lienhard's upon her as if with chains and bonds, she was seized with the ambitious desire to accomplish something still more amazing. The man to whom her heart clung, the Emperor, the countless multitude below, were all at this time subject to her in heart and mind. They could think and feel nothing except what concerned her, her art, and her fate. She could and would show to Lienhard, to the Emperor, to all, what they had never witnessed. They should turn faint with sympathizing anxiety. She would make then realize what genuine art, skill, and daring could accomplish. Everything else, even the desire for applause, was forgotten. Though her performance might be called only a perilous feat, she felt it to be true, genuine art. Her whole soul was merged in the desire to execute, boldly and yet gracefully, the greatest and most perfect performance attainable

by a ropedancer. With beads of perspiration on her brow, and eyes uplifted, she threw the cage aside, swung her Mercury staff aloft, and danced along the rope in waltz time, as though borne by the gods of the wind. Whirling swiftly around, her slender figure darted in graceful curves from one end of the narrow path to the other. Then the applause reached the degree of enthusiastic madness which she desired; even Loni clapped his hands from the steeple window. She had never seen him do this to any of the company. Yes, she must have accomplished her purpose well; but she would show him and the others something still more wonderful. What she had just done was capable of many additional feats; she had tried it.

With fluttering hands and pulses she instantly loosed from her panting bosom and her hips the garland of roses and leaves twined about the upper portion of her body, and swung it around her in graceful curves as she knelt and rose on the rope.

She had often jumped rope on the low

rope, turning completely around so that she faced the other way. To repeat this performance on the one stretched to the steeple would certainly not be expected from her or from any other. Suppose she should use the garland as a rope and venture to leap over it on this giddy height? Suppose she should even succeed in turning around? The rope was firm. If her plan was successful, she would have accomplished something unprecedented; if she failed—if, while turning, she lost her balance—her scanty stock of pleasure here below would be over, and also her great grief and insatiable yearning. One thing was certain: Lienhard would watch her breathlessly, nay, tremble for her. Perhaps it was too much to hope that he would mourn her sincerely, should the leap cost her life; but he would surely pity her, and he could never forget the moment of the fall, and therefore herself. Loni would tear the gold circlet from his dyed black locks and, in his exaggerated manner, call himself a son of misfortune, and her the greatest artist who had ever

trodden the rope. All Augsburg, all the dignitaries of the realm, even the Emperor, would pity her, and the end of her life would be as proud and as renowned as that of the chivalrous hero who dies victor on the stricken field. If the early part of her life had been insignificant and wretched, its close should be grand and beautiful.

Long consideration was foreign to Kuni's nature. While these thoughts were darting with the speed of lightning through her excited brain, she stripped from the garland, with the presence of mind which her calling teaches even in serious peril, the roses which might have caught her feet, and swung it in a wide circle above her. Then nimbly, yet careful to maintain in every movement the grace without which the most difficult feat would have seemed to her valueless, she summoned all the strength and caution she possessed, went forward at a run, and—she did not know herself just how it was done—dared the leap over the rope once, twice, and the third and fourth time even accomplished the

turn successfully. It had not once cost her an effort to maintain her balance.

Again she saw Loni clapping his hands at the window, and the acclamations of the crowd, which echoed like peals of thunder from the lofty, gable-roofed houses, informed her that the boldness of the venture and the skill with which she had performed it were appreciated by these spectators. True, she could not distinguish the voice of any individual, but she thought she knew that Lienhard was one of those who shouted "Bravo!" and clapped most loudly. He must have perceived now that she was something more than a poor thief of a rosary, a useless bread-eater in the Schürstab household.

She straightened the garland again and, while preparing to take another run, repeat the feat, and, if her buoyancy held out, try to whirl around twice, which she had never failed to accomplish on the low rope, she could not resist the temptation of casting a hasty glance at Lienhard; she had never ascended to the steeple without looking at him.

Secure of herself, in the glad conciousness of success, she gazed down.

There sat the illustrious Maximilian, still clapping his hands. Gratefully, yet with a passionate desire for fresh applause, the resolve to show him the very best which she could accomplish was strengthened. But the next moment the blood faded from her slightly rouged cheeks, for Lienhard—was it possible, was it imaginable?—Lienhard Groland was not looking up at her! Without moving his hands or vouchsafing her a single glance, he was gazing into the face of the little wearer of the laurel wreath, with whom he was eagerly talking. He was under her thrall, body and soul. Yet it could not be, she could not have seen distinctly. She must look down once more, to correct the error. She did so, and a torturing anguish seized her heart. He was chatting with the child as before; nay, with still more warmth. As he now saw nothing which was happening upon the rope, he had probably also failed to heed what she had performed, dared, accomplished, mainly for

his sake, at the peril of her life, on the dizzy height. His wife was still clapping her hands at his side, but Lienhard, as though deaf and blind to everything else, was gazing at the page which the miserable little elf was just giving him. There was certainly writing on it—perhaps a charm which rendered him subject to her. How else could he have brought himself to overlook so unkindly herself and her art—the best she had to bestow—for the sake of this child?

Then, besides the keenest sorrow, a fierce, burning hate took possession of her soul.

She had not appealed to her saint for years; but now, in a brief, ejaculatory prayer, she besought her to drive this child from Lienhard, punish her with misery, suffering, and destruction. A sharp pang which she had never before experienced pierced her to the heart. The pure, sunny air which she inhaled on her lofty height seemed like acrid smoke, and forced tears into the eyes which had not wept for many a long day.

As, not knowing exactly what she was

doing, with her ears deafened by the shouts of the crowd, among whom Lienhard now, with anxious suspense, watched her every movement, she again raised the rope and prepared to spring, she fancied that her narrow path rose higher and higher. One more step, and suddenly, with Loni's shriek of horror and the clown's terrified "Jesus and Mary, she is falling!" ringing on the air, she felt as if the rope had parted directly in front of her. Then a hurricane appeared to howl around her, bearing her away she knew not whither. It seemed as though the tempest had seized the ends of the rope, and was dealing terrible blows with them upon her shoulders, her back, and her feet. Meanwhile the little wearer of the wreath was lying on a black cloud opposite to her at Lienhard's feet.

She still held the sheet in her hand, and was shouting to the angry elements the magic formulas which it contained. Their power—Kuni knew it—had unchained them. Lienhard's deep voice mingled with her furious cries until the roar of the sea, on whose rocky

shore the hurricane must have dashed her, drowned every other sound, and rolled over her, sometimes in scorching crimson, sometimes in icy crystal waves. Then, for a long time, she saw and heard nothing more.

When her deadened imagination again began to stir, she fancied that she was struggling with a huge crab, which was cutting her foot with shears. The little elf was urging it on, as the huntsmen cheer the hounds. The pain and hate she felt would have been intolerable if Lienhard had made common cause with the terrible child. But he reproved her conduct, and even struggled with the kobold who tried to prevent his releasing her from the crab. The elf proved stronger than he. The terrible shears continued to torture her. The more she suffered, the more eagerly Lienhard seemed trying to help her, and this soothed her and blended a sweet sense of comfort with the burning pain.

CHAPTER VI.

KUNI remained under the spell of these delusions for many days and nights. When she at last regained her senses, she was lying on a plain couch in a long, whitewashed hall. The well-scoured floor was strewn with sand and pine needles. Other beds stood beside hers. On one wall hung a large wooden crucifix, painted with glaring colours; on the other a touching picture of the Mater Dolorosa, with the swords in her heart, looked down upon her.

Beside Kuni's pallet stood a Gray Sister and an elderly man, evidently a physician. His long black robe, tall dark cap, and gold-headed cane bore witness to it. Bending forward, with eyeglasses on his prominent nose, he gazed intently into her face.

Her return to consciousness seemed to please him, and he showed himself to be a kind, experienced leech. With tireless solicitude he strove to cure the numerous injuries which she had received, and she soon learned through him and the nun, that she had fallen from the rope and escaped death as if by a miracle. The triumphal arch under her, and the garlands which decorated the wooden structure, had caught her before she touched the pavement. True, her right leg was broken, and it had been necessary to amputate her left foot in order to save her life. Many a wound and slash on her breast and head also needed healing, and her greatest ornament, her long, thick, dark hair, had been cut off.

Why had they called her, the ropedancer, back to a life which henceforward could offer her nothing save want and cruel suffering? She uttered this reproach to her preservers very indignantly; but as the physician saw her eating a bunch of grapes with much enjoyment, he asked if this pleasure did not suffice to make her rejoice over the preserva-

tion of her existence. There were a thousand similar gifts of God, which scarcely seemed worthy of notice, yet in the aggregate outweighed a great sorrow which, moreover, habit daily diminished.

The Sister tried, by other arguments, to reconcile her to the life which had been preserved, but the words her devout heart inspired and which were intended for a pious soul, produced little influence upon the neglected child of the highroad. Kuni felt most deeply the reference to the sorely afflicted Mother of God. If such sorrow had been sent to the noblest and purest of mortals, through whom God had deigned to give his divine Son to the world, what grief could be too great for her, the wandering vagabond? She often silently repeated this to herself; yet only too frequently her impetuous heart rebelled against the misery which she felt that she would encounter. But many weeks were to pass before she recovered; a severe relapse again endangered her life.

During the first days of illness she had

talked to Lienhard in her fevered visions, called him by name, and warned him against the spiteful elf who would ruin him. Frequently, too, oaths and horrible, coarse imprecations, such as are heard only from the mouths of the vagrants among whom she had grown to womanhood, fell from her burning lips. When she improved, the leech asked in the jesting tone which elderly men are fond of using to young women whose heart secrets they think they have detected, what wrong her lover had done her. The Sister, nay, even the abbess, wished to learn what she meant by the wicked witch whom she had mentioned with such terrible curses during the ravings of the fever, but she made no reply. In fact, she said very little, and her nurses thought her a reserved creature with an obdurate nature; for she obstinately rejected the consolations of religion.

Only to her confessor, a kind old priest, who knew how to discover the best qualities in every one, did she open her heart so far as

to reveal that she loved the husband of another and had once wished evil, ay, the very worst evil, to a neighbour. But since the sin had been committed only in thought, the kindly guardian of her conscience was quickly disposed to grant her absolution if, as a penance, she would repeat a goodly number of paternosters and undertake a pilgrimage. If she had had sound feet, she ought to have journeyed to Santiago di Compostella; but, since her condition precluded this, a visit to Altötting in Bavaria would suffice. But Kuni by no means desired any mitigation of the penance. She silently resolved to undertake the pilgrimage to Compostella, at the World's End,* in distant Spain, though she did not know how it would be possible to accomplish this with her mutilated foot. Not even to her kind confessor did she reveal this design. The girl who had relied upon herself from childhood, needed no explanation, no confidante.

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* Cape Finisterre.

Therefore, during the long days and nights which she was obliged to spend in bed, she pondered still more constantly upon her own past. That she had been drawn and was still attracted to Lienhard with resistless power, was true; yet whom, save herself, had this wounded or injured? On the other hand, it had assuredly been a heavy sin that she had called down such terrible curses upon the child. Still, even now she might have had good reason to execrate the wearer of the wreath; for she alone, not Lienhard, was the sole cause of her misfortune. Her prayer on the rope that the saints would destroy the hated child, and the idea which then occupied her mind, that she was really a grown maiden, whose elfin delicacy of figure was due to her being one of the fays or elves mentioned in the fairy tales, had made a deep impression upon her memory.

Whenever she thought of that supplication she again felt the bitterness she had tasted on the rope. Though she believed herself justified in hating the little mischief-maker, the

prayer uttered before her fall did not burden her soul much less heavily than a crime. Suppose the Sister was right, and that the saints heard every earnest petition?

She shuddered at the thought. The child was so young, so delicate. Though she had caused her misfortune, the evil was not done intentionally. Such thoughts often induced Kuni to clasp her hands and pray to the saint not to fulfil the prayer she uttered at that time; but she did not continue the petition long, a secret voice whispered that every living creature—man and beast—felt the impulse to inflict a similar pang on those who caused suffering, and that she, who believed the whole world wicked, need not be better than the rest.

Meanwhile she longed more and more eagerly to know the name of the little creature that had brought so much trouble upon her, and whether she was still forcing herself between Lienhard and his beautiful wife.

As soon as she was able to talk again, she began her inquiries. The Sister, who was entirely absorbed in her calling and never left

the scene of her wearisome toil, had little to tell; but the leech and the priest, in reply to her questions concerning what had happened during the period of her unconsciousness, informed her that the Emperor had ordered that she should receive the most careful nursing, and had bestowed a donation upon the convent for the purpose. He had thought of her future, too. When she recovered, she would have the five heller pounds which the generous sovereign had left for her as a partial compensation for the injuries sustained while employing her rare skill for the delight of the multitude and, above all, himself. A wealthy Nuremberg Honourable, Lienhard Groland, a member of the Council, had also interested himself in her and deposited the same amount with the abbess, in case she should recover the use of her limbs and did not prefer to spend the remainder of her life here, though only as a lay sister. In that case he would be ready to defray the cost of admission.

"That the lofty convent walls might rise

between him and the sight of me!" Kuni said to herself at this information, with a bitter smile. On the other hand, her eyes filled with tears of genuine emotion and sincere shame, when she learned from the leech that Herr Lienhard Groland's lovely wife had come daily to the convent to inquire about her, and had even honoured her couch with a visit several times. She did not remain absent until one day, in the noble lady's presence, Kuni, when her fever was fiercest, loaded the wearer of the wreath, whom her delirium often brought before her as a nightmare, with the most savage and blasphemous curses. The gracious young wife was overwhelmed with horror, which had doubtless prevented her return, unless her absence was due to departure from the city. Besides, she had committed the care of inquiring about her convalescence to an aristocratic friend in Augsburg, the wife of the learned city clerk, Doctor Peutinger, a member of the famous Welser family of Augsburg. The latter had often inquired for her in person, until the

illness of her own dear child had kept her at home. Yet, in spite of this, her housekeeper had appeared the day before to inform the abbess that, if the injured girl should recover and wished to lead a respectable life in future, she might be sure of a welcome and easy duties in her own household. This surely ought to be a great comfort to Kuni, the physician added; for she could no longer pursue ropedancing, and the Peutingers were lavishly endowed with worldly goods and intellectual gifts, and, besides, were people of genuine Christian spirit. The convent, too, would be ready to receive her—the abbess had told him so—if Herr Groland, of Nuremberg, kept his promise of paying her admission dues.

All these things awakened a new world of thoughts and feelings in the convalescent. That they ought, above all, to have aroused sincere gratitude, she felt keenly, yet she could not succeed in being especially thankful. It would be doing Lienhard a favour, she repeated to herself, if she should enter a

convent, and she would rather have sought shelter in a lion's den than under the Peutinger roof. She had been informed the day before that the city clerk's wife was the mother of the child upon whom she had called down misfortune and death.

The keeper of an Augsburg bath-house, who had burned herself with boiling water, occupied the next bed. She was recovering, and was a talkative woman, whose intrusive loquacity at first annoyed Kuni, nay, when she could not silence it, caused her pain. But her conversation soon revealed that she knew every stick and stone in her native city. Kuni availed herself of this, and did not need to ask many questions to learn everything that she desired to know about the little be-garlanded elf.

She was Juliane, the young daughter of Herr Conrad Peutinger, the city clerk—a girl of unusual cleverness, and a degree of learning never before found in a child eleven years old. The bath-house keeper had many wonderful stories to relate of her remarkable

wisdom, with which even highly educated men could not vie. In doing so, she blamed the father and mother, who had been unnatural parents to the charming child; for to make the marvel complete, and to gratify their own vanity, they had taxed the little girl's mind with such foolish strenuousness that the frail body suffered. She had heard this in her own bath-house from the lips of the child's aunt and from other distinguished friends of the Welsers and Peutingers. Unfortunately, these sensible women proved to have been right; for soon after the close of the Reichstag, Juliane was attacked by a lingering illness, from which rumour now asserted that she would never recover. Some people even regarded the little girl's sickness as a just punishment of God, to whom the constant devotion of the father and his young daughter to the old pagans and their ungodly writings must have given grave offence.

This news increased to the utmost the anxiety from which Kuni had long suffered. Often as she thought of Lienhard, she remem-

bered still more frequently that it was she, who had prayed for sickness to visit the child of a mother, who had so kindly offered her, the strolling player, whom good women usually shunned, the shelter of her distinguished house.

The consciousness of owing a debt of gratitude to those, against whom she had sinned so heavily, oppressed her. The kind proposal of the sick child's mother seemed like a mockery. It was painful even to hear the name of Peutinger.

Besides, the further she advanced toward recovery, the more unendurable appeared the absence of liberty. The kind efforts of the abbess to keep her in the cloister, and teach her to make herself useful there by sewing, were unsuccessful; for she could not turn the spinning wheel on account of her amputated foot, and she had neither inclination nor patience for the finer branches of needlework.

Those who charged her with a lamentable lack of perseverance were right; the linen which she began to hem fell into her lap

only too soon. When her eyes—which could see nothing here except a small walled yard—closed while she was working, the others thought that she was asleep; but her mind remained awake, though she had lowered her lids, and it wandered restlessly over valleys, rivers, and mountains through the wide, wide world. She saw herself in imagination travelling along the highway with nimble jugglers, merry musicians, and other care-free vagrant folk, instead of plying the needle. Even the whirling dust, the rushing wind, and the refreshing rain outside seemed desirable compared with the heavy convent air impregnated by a perpetual odour of lavender.

When at last, in the month of March, little Afra, the fair-haired niece of the portress, brought her the first snowdrop, and Kuni saw a pair of starlings enter the box on the budding linden before her window, she could no longer bear her imprisonment in the convent.

Within these walls she must fade, perhaps die and return to dust. In spite of all the

warnings, representations, entreaties, and promises of those who—she gratefully perceived it—meant well toward her, she persisted in her desire to be dismissed, to live out of doors as she had always done. At last they paid her what was due, but she accepted only the Emperor's bounty, proudly refusing Lienhard Groland's money, earnestly as she was urged to add it to the other and to the viaticum bestowed by the nuns.

CHAPTER VII.

THE April sun was shining brightly when the convent gates closed behind Kuni. The lindens in the square were already putting forth young leaves, the birds were singing, and her heart swelled more joyously than it had done for many years.

True, the cough which had tormented her all winter attacked her in the shady cloister, but she had learned to use her wooden foot, and with a cane in one hand and her little bundle in the other she moved sturdily on.

After making her pilgrimage to Compostella, she intended to seek her old employer, Loni. Perhaps he could give her a place as crier, or if the cough prevented that, in collecting the money or training the children. He was a kind-hearted man. If he were even

tolerably prosperous he would certainly let her travel with the band, and give the girl who was injured in his service the bit of food she required. Besides, in former days, when she scattered gold with lavish hands, he had predicted what had now befallen her, and when he left Augsburg he had asked the nuns to tell her that if she should ever be in want she must remember Loni.

With the Emperor's five heller pounds, and the two florins which she had received as a viaticum from the convent, she could journey a long distance through the world; for there were plenty of carriers and travellers with carts and wagons who would take her for a trifle, and the vagabonds on the highway rarely left people like her in the lurch.

Probably, in former days, she had looked forward to the future with greater strength and different expectations, yet, even as it was, in spite of the cough and the painful pricking in her scars, she found it pleasant so long as she was free and could follow what-

ever way she chose. She knew the city, and limped through the streets and alleys toward the tavern where the strolling players usually lodged.

On the way she met a gentleman in a suit of light armour, whom she recognised in the distance as the Knight of Neckerfels, who had been paying court to her before her fall. He was walking alone and looked her directly in the face, but he did not have the slightest idea that he had met madcap Kuni. It was only too evident that he supposed her to be a total stranger. Yet it would have been impossible for any one to recognise her.

Mirrors were not allowed in the convent, but a bright new tin plate had showed her her emaciated face with the broad scar on the forehead, the sunken eyes, and the whole narrow head, where the hair, which grew out again very slowly, was just an ugly length. Now the sight of the bony hand which grasped the cane brought a half-sorrowful, half-scornful, smile to her lips. Her arm had been plump and round, but was now little larger than

a stick. Pretty Kuni, the ropedancer, no longer existed; she must become accustomed to have the world regard her as a different and far less important personage, whom Lienhard, too—and this was fortunate—would not have deemed worthy of a glance.

And yet, if the inner self is the true one, there was little change in her. Her soul was moved by the same feelings, only there was now a touch of bitterness. One great advantage of her temperament, it is true, had vanished with her physical beauty and strength—the capacity to hope for happiness and joy. Perhaps it would never return; an oppressive feeling of guilt, usually foreign to her careless nature, had oppressed her ever since she had heard recently in the convent that the child on whom she had called down death and destruction was lying hopelessly ill, and would scarcely live till the joyous Whitsuntide.

This now came back to her mind. The jubilant sense of freedom deserted her; she walked thoughtfully on until she reached the neighbourhood of Jacob Fugger's house.

A long funeral procession was moving slowly toward her. Some very exalted and aristocratic person must be taking the journey to the grave, for it was headed by all the clergy in the city. Choristers, in the most elaborate dress, swinging incense holders by delicate metal chains and bearing lanterns on long poles, surrounded the lofty cross.

Every one of distinction in Augsburg, all the children who attended school, and all the members of the various ecclesiastical orders and guilds in the city marched before the bier. Kuni had never seen such a funeral procession. Perhaps the one she witnessed in Milan, when a great nobleman was buried, was longer, but in this every individual seemed to feel genuine grief. Even the schoolboys who, on such solemn occasions, usually play all sorts of secret pranks, walked as mournfully as if each had lost some relative who was specially dear to him. Among the girls there were few whose rosy cheeks were not constantly wet with tears.

From the first Kuni had believed that she

knew who was being borne to the grave. Now she heard several women whispering near her mention the name of Juliane Peutinger. A pale-faced gold embroiderer, who had recently bordered a gala dress with leaves and tendrils for the dead girl's sister, described, sobbing, the severe suffering amid which this fairest blossom of Augsburg girlhood had withered ere death finally broke the slender stem.

Suddenly she stopped; a cry of mingled astonishment, lamentation, and delight, sometimes rising, sometimes falling, ran through the crowd which had gathered along the sides of the street.

The bier was in sight.

Twelve youths bore the framework, covered with a richly embroidered blue cloth, on which the coffin rested. It was open, and the dead girl's couch was so high that it seemed as though the sleeper was only resting lightly on the white silk pillow. A wreath again encircled her head, but this time blossoming myrtles blended with the laurel in the brown

curls that lay in thick, soft locks on the snowy pillows and the lace-trimmed shroud.

Juliane's eyes were closed. Ah! how gladly Kuni would have kissed those long-lashed lids to win even one look of forgiveness from her whom her curse had perhaps snatched from the green spring world!

She remembered the sunny radiance with which this sleeper's eyes had sparkled as they met Lienhard's. They were the pure mirror of the keen, mobile intellect and the innocent, loving soul of this rare child. Now death had closed them, and Juliane's end had been one of suffering. The pale embroiderer had said so, and the sorrowful droop of the sweet little mouth, which gave the wondrously beautiful, delicate, touching little face so pathetic an expression, betrayed it. If the living girl had measured her own young intellect with that of grown people, and her face had worn the impress of precocious maturity, now it was that of a charming child who had died in suffering.

Kuni also felt this, and asked herself how

it had been possible for her heart to cherish such fierce hatred against this little one, who had numbered only eleven years.

But had this Juliane resembled other children?

No, no! No Emperor's daughter of her age would have been accompanied to the churchyard with such pageantry, such deep, universal grief.

She had been the jewel of a great city. This was proclaimed by many a Greek and Latin maxim on tablets borne by the friends of the great humanist who, with joyful pride, called her his daughter.

Kuni could not read, but she heard at least one sentence translated by a Benedictine monk to the nun at his side: "He whose death compels those who knew him to weep, has the fairest end."*

If this were true, Juliane's end was indeed fair; for she herself, whom the child had met only to inflict pain, had her eyes dimmed by

* Seneca, Hippol., 881.

tears, and wherever she turned she saw people weeping.

Most of those who lined the street could have had no close relations with the dead girl. But yonder black-robed mourners who followed the bier were her parents, her brothers and sisters, her nearest relatives, the members of the Council, and the family servants. And she, the wretched, reckless, sinful, crippled strolling player, for whom not a soul on earth cared, whose death would not have drawn even a single tear from any eye, to whom a speedy end could be only a benefit, was perhaps the cause of the premature drying up of this pure fountain of joy, which had refreshed so many hearts and animated them with the fairest hopes.

The tall lady, whose noble face and majestic figure were shrouded in a thick veil, was Juliane's mother—and she had offered the sick ropedancer a home in her wealthy household.

"If she had only known," thought Kuni, "the injury I was inflicting upon her heart's

treasure, she would rather have hunted me with dogs from her threshold."

In spite of the veil which floated around the stately figure of the grieving mother, she could see her bosom rise and fall with her sobs of anguish. Kuni's compassionate heart made it impossible for her to watch this sorrow longer, and, covering her face with her hands, she turned her back upon the procession and, weeping aloud, limped away as fast as her injured foot would let her. Meanwhile she sometimes said to herself that she was the worst of all sinners because she had cursed the dead girl and called down death and destruction upon her head, sometimes she listened to the voice within, which told her that she had no reason to grieve over Juliane's death, and completely embitter her already wretched life by remorse and self-accusations; the dead girl was the sole cause of her terrible fall. But the defiant rebellion against the consciousness of guilt, which moved her so deeply, always ceased abruptly as soon as it raised its head; for one fact was positive, if

the curse she had called down upon the innocent child, who had done her no intentional wrong, had really caused Juliane's end, a whole life was not long enough to atone for the sin which she had committed. Yet what atonement was still in her power, after the death which she had summoned had performed its terrible work of executioner?

"Nothing, nothing at all!" she said to herself angrily, resolving, as she had so often done with better success, to forget what had happened, cast the past into oblivion, and live in the present as before. But ere she could attempt to fulfil this determination, the image of the tall, grief-bowed figure of the woman who had called Juliane her dear child rose before her mind, and it seemed as if a cold, heavy hand paralyzed the wings of the light-hearted temperament which had formerly borne her pleasantly over so many things. Then she told herself that, in order not to go to perdition herself, she must vow, sacrifice, undertake everything for the salvation of the dead girl and of her own heavily

burdened soul. For the first time she felt a longing to confide her feelings to some one. If Lienhard had been within reach and disposed to listen to her, he would have understood, and known what course to advise.

True, the thought that he was not looking at her when she took the fatal leap still haunted her. He could not have showed more offensively how little he cared for her—but perhaps he was under the influence of a spell; for she must be something to him. This was no vain self-deception; had it not been so, would he have come in person to her couch of pain, or cared for her so kindly after the accident?

In the convent she had reached the conviction that it would be degrading to think longer of the man who, in return for the most ardent love, offered nothing but alms in jingling coin; yet her poor heart would not cease its yearning.

Meanwhile she never wearied of seeking motives that would place his conduct in a more favourable light. Whatever he might have withheld from her, he was nevertheless

the best and noblest of men, and as she limped aimlessly on, the conviction strengthened that the mere sight of him would dispel the mists which, on this sunny spring day, seemed to veil everything around and within her.

But he remained absent, and suddenly it seemed more disgraceful to seek him than to stand in the stocks.

Yet the pilgrimage to Compostella, of which the confessor had spoken? For the very reason that it had been described to her as unattainable, it would perhaps be rated at a high value in heaven, and restore to her while on earth the peace she had lost.

She pondered over this thought on her way to the tavern, where she found a corner to sleep, and a carrier who, on the day after the morrow, would take her to the sea for a heller pound. Other pilgrims had also engaged passage at Antwerp for Corunna, the harbour of Compostella, and her means were sufficient for the voyage. This assurance somewhat soothed her while she remained among people of her own calling.

But she spent a sleepless night; for again and again the dead child's image appeared vividly before her. Rising from the soft pillows in the coffin, she shook her finger threateningly at her, or, weeping and wailing, pointed down to the flames—doubtless those of purgatory—which were blazing upward around her, and had already caught the hem of her shroud.

Kuni arose soon after sunrise with a bewildered brain. Before setting out on her pilgrimage she wished to attend mass, and—that the Holy Virgin might be aware of her good intentions—repeat in church some of the paternosters which her confessor had imposed.

She went out with the simple rosary that the abbess had given her upon her wrist, but when she had left the tavern behind she saw a great crowd in front of the new St. Ulrich's Church, and recognised among the throngs of people who had flocked thither her companion in suffering at the convent, the keeper of the bath-house, who had been cured of her burns long before.

She had left her business to buy an indul-

gence for her own sins, and to purchase for the soul of her husband—whose death-bed confession, it is true, had been a long one—for the last time, but for many centuries at once, redemption from the fires of purgatory. The Dominican friar Tetzel, from Nuremberg, was here with his coffer, and carried written promises which secured certain remission of punishment for all sins, even those committed long ago, or to be committed in the future. The woman had experienced the power of his papers herself. Tetzel had come to Augsburg about a year after her husband's death, and, as *she* knew how many sins he had committed, she put her hand into her purse to free him from the flames. They must have burned very fiercely; for, while awake at night and in her dreams, she had often heard him wailing and complaining piteously. But after she bought the paper he became quiet and, on the third night, she saw him with her own eyes enter the room, and heard him promise her a great happiness in return for her faithful remembrance.

The very next Sunday, Veit Haselnüss, the bath-house proprietor, a well-to-do man who owned another house besides the one where he lived, invited her to take a walk with him. She knew instantly that her late husband was beginning to pay his debt of gratitude with this visitor and, in fact, a short time after, the worthy man asked her to be his wife, though she had three little children, and his oldest daughter by his first wife was already able to look after the housekeeping. The wedding took place on Whitsunday, and she owed this great happiness entirely to the dispensation which had released the dead man's soul from the fires of purgatory and induced him to show his thankfulness.

Kuni listened to her companion's rapid flood of talk, until she herself enjoined silence to hear the black-robed priest who stood beside the coffer.

He was just urging his hearers, in a loud voice, to abandon the base avarice which gathers pence. There was still time to gain, in exchange for dead florins, living salvation.

Let those who repented sin listen, and they would hear the voices of wailing parents, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, and children, who had preceded them to the other world. Whose heart was so utterly turned to stone, whose parsimony, spite of all his love of money, was so strong that he would allow these tortured souls to burn and suffer in the flames, when it was in his power, by putting his hand into his purse, to buy a dispensation which would as surely redeem them from the fires of purgatory as his Imperial Majesty's pardon would release an imprisoned thief from jail?

Scales seemed to fall from Kuni's eyes. She hastily forced her way to the Dominican, who was just wiping the perspiration from his brow with the hem of the white robe under his black cowl.

Coughing and panting, he was preparing his voice for a fresh appeal, meanwhile opening the iron-bound box, and pointing out to the throng the placard beside his head, which announced that the money obtained by the

indulgences was intended for the Turkish war. Then, in fluent language, he explained to the bystanders that this meant that the Holy Father in Rome intended to drive the hereditary foe of Christianity back to the steppes and deserts of the land of Asia, where he belonged. In order to accomplish this work, so pleasing to the Lord, the Church was ready to make lavish use of the treasures of mercy intrusted to her. Deliverance from the flames of purgatory would never be more cheaply purchased than at this opportunity. Then he thrust his little fat hand, on which several valuable rings glittered, into the box, and held out to the bystanders a small bundle of papers like an open pack of cards.

Kuni summoned up her courage and asked whether they would also possess the power to remove a curse. Tetzel eagerly assented, adding that he had papers which would wash the soul as white from every sin as soap would cleanse a sooty hand, even though, instead of "curse," its name was "parricide."

The most costly had the power to transfer scoundrels roasting in the hottest flames of purgatory to the joys of paradise, as yonder sparrow had just soared from the dust of the street to the elm bough.

Kuni timidly asked the price of an indulgence, but the Dominican unctuously explained that they were not sold like penny rolls at the baker's; the heavier the sin, the higher the fine to be paid. First of all, she must confess sincere contrition for what had been done and inform him how, in spite of her youth, she had been led into such heinous guilt. Kuni replied that she had long mourned her error most deeply, and then began to whisper to Tetzel how she had been induced to curse a fellow-mortal. She desired nothing for herself. Her sole wish was to release the dead girl from the flames of purgatory, and the curse which, by her guilt, burdened her soul. But the Dominican had only half listened, and as many who wanted indulgences were crowding around his box, he interrupted Kuni by offering her a

paper which he would make out in the name of the accursed Juliane Peutinger—if he had heard correctly.

Such cases seemed to be very familiar to him, but the price he asked was so large that the girl grew pale with terror.

Yet she must have the redeeming paper, and Tetzel lowered his price after her declaration that she possessed only five heller pounds and the convent viaticum. Besides, she stated that she had already bargained with the carrier for the journey to the sea.

This, however, had no influence upon the Dominican, as the indulgence made the pilgrimage to Compostella unnecessary. Since it would redeem the accursed person from the fires of purgatory, she, too, was absolved from the vow which drew her thither.

With stern decision he therefore insisted upon demanding the entire sum in her possession. He could only do it so cheaply because her face and her lost foot showed that she was destined to suffer part of the eternal torture here on earth.

Then Kuni yielded. The paper was made out in the name of Juliane, she gave up her little store, and returned to the inn a penniless beggar, but with a lighter heart, carrying the precious paper under the handkerchief crossed over her bosom. But there the carrier refused her a seat without the money which she had promised him, and the landlord demanded payment for her night's lodging and the bit of food she had eaten.

Should she go back to the convent and ask for the little sum which Lienhard had left there for her?

The struggle was a hard one, but pride finally conquered. She renounced the kindly meant gift of her only friend. When the abbess returned the money to him, he could not help perceiving that she was no beggar and scorned to be his debtor. If he then asked himself why, he would find the right answer. She did not confess it to herself in plain words, but she wished to remain conscious that, whether he desired it or not, she had given her heart's best love to this *one*

man without reward, merely because it was her pleasure to do it. At last she remembered that she still possessed something valuable. She had not thought of it before, because it had been as much a part of herself as her eyes or her lips, and it would have seemed utterly impossible to part with it. This article was a tolerably heavy gold ring, with a sparkling ruby in the centre. She had drawn it from her father's finger after he had taken his last leap and she was called to his corpse. She did not even know whether he had received the circlet as a wedding ring from the mother of whom she had no remembrance, or where he obtained it. But she had heard that it was of considerable value, and when she set off to sell the jewel, she did not find it very hard to gave it up. It seemed as if her father, from the grave, was providing his poor child with the means she needed to continue to support her life.

She had heard in the convent of Graslin, the goldsmith, who had bestowed on the chapel a silver shrine for the relics, and went to him.

When she stood before the handsome gable-roofed house which he occupied she shrank back a little. At first he received her sternly and repellantly enough, but, as soon as she introduced herself as the ropedancer who had met with the accident, he showed himself to be a kindly old gentleman.

After one of the city soldiers had said that she told the truth and had just been dismissed from the convent, he paid her the full value of the ring and added a florin out of sympathy and the admiration he felt for the charm which still dwelt in her sparkling blue eyes.

But Compostella was indeed far away. Her new supply of money was sufficient for the journey there, but how could she return? Besides, her cough troubled her very seriously, and it seemed as though she could not travel that long distance alone. The dealer in indulgences had said that the paper made the pilgrimage unnecessary, and the confessor in the convent had only commanded her to go to Altötting. With this neighbouring

goal before her, she turned her back upon Augsburg the following morning.

Her hope of meeting on the way compassionate people, who would give her a seat in their vehicles, was fulfilled. She reached Altötting sooner than she had expected. During the journey, sometimes in a peasant's cart, sometimes in a freight wagon, she had thought often of little Juliane, and always with a quiet, nay, a contented heart. In the famous old church, at the end of her pilgrimage, she saw a picture in which the naked souls of children were soaring upward to heaven from the flames blazing around them in purgatory.

The confessor had sent her to the right place.

Here a fervent prayer had the power to rescue a child's soul from the fires of purgatory. Many other votive pictures, the pilgrims at the inn, and a priest whom she questioned, confirmed it. She also heard from various quarters that she had not paid too high a price for the indulgence. This

strengthened her courage and henceforward, nay, even during the time of sore privation which she afterward endured, she blessed a thousand times her resolve to buy the ransoming paper from Tetzel, the Dominican; for she thought that she daily experienced its power.

Whenever Juliane appeared, her face wore a friendly expression—nay, once, in a dream, she floated before her as if she wished to thank her, in the form of a beautiful angel with large pink and white wings. She no longer needed to fear the horrible curse which she had called down upon the little one, and once more thought of Lienhard with pleasure. When he learned in the other world how she had atoned for the wrong which she had done his little favourite, she would be sure of his praise.

To be held in light esteem, nay, even despised, was part of her calling, like her constant wandering. She had longed for applause in her art, but for herself she had desired nothing save swift draughts of pleasure,

since she had learned how little she was regarded by the only person whose opinion she valued. She could never have expected that he would hold her in high esteem, since he was so indifferent to her art that he did not even think it worth while to lift his eyes to the rope. Yet the idea that he placed her in the same rank with others in her profession seemed unendurable. But she need grieve over this no longer, and when she remembered that even the sorest want had not been able to induce her to touch his alms, she could have fairly shouted for joy amid all her misery. The conviction that one man, who was the best and noblest of his sex, might deem her a poor, unfortunate girl, but never a creature who deserved contempt, was the beam to which she clung, when the surges of her pitiable, wandering life threatened to close over her and stifle her.

CHAPTER VIII.

As Kuni's troubled soul had derived so much benefit from the short pilgrimage to Altötting, she hoped to obtain far more from a visit to Santiago di Compostella, famed throughout Christendom.

True, her old master, Loni, whom she had met at Regensburg, permitted her to join his band, but when she perceived that he was far less prosperous than before, and that she could not be useful to him in any way, she left him at Cologne because a kind-hearted captain offered to take her to Vlissingen without pay. Thence she really did set out upon the pilgrimage to Santiago di Compostella; but St. James, the patron saint of the Spaniards, whose untiring mercy so many praised, did not prove specially

favourable to her. The voyage to Compostella, the principal place where he was reverenced, which annually attracted thousands of pilgrims, cost her her last penny, and the cold nights which she was obliged to spend on deck increased her cough until it became almost unendurably violent.

In Santiago di Compostella both her means and her strength were exhausted. After vainly expecting for a long time some token of the saint's helpful kindness, only two courses were left: either she must remain in Compostella and join the beggars in the crowded road to the place of pilgrimage, or she must accept the proposal made by tongueless Cyriax and go back with him to Germany. At first she had been afraid of the brutal fellow, who feigned insanity and was led about by his wife with a chain; but once, when red-haired Gitta was seized by the Inquisition, and spent two days and two nights in jail, and Kuni nursed her child in her place, she had found him more friendly. Besides, in Compostella, the swearer had been

in his most cheerful mood. Every day had filled his purse, because there was no lack of people and he understood how to extort money by the terror which horrible outbreaks of his feigned malady inspired among the densely crowded pilgrims. His wife possessed a remedy which would instantly calm his ravings, but it was expensive, and she had not the money to buy it. Not only in Compostella, but also on the long journey from Bavaria through the Swiss mountains, France, Navarre, and the whole of northern Spain, there were always kind-hearted or timid people from whom the money for the "dear prescription" could be obtained.

A cart drawn by a donkey conveyed the child of this worthy couple. When Kuni met her at Compostella she was a sickly little girl about two years old, with an unnaturally large head and thin, withered legs, who seemed to be mute because she used her mouth only to eat and to make a movement of the lips which sounded like "Baba." This sound, Cyriax explained, was a call

that meant "papa." That was the name aristocratic children gave their fathers, and it meant him alone, because the little girl resembled him and loved him better than she did any one else. He really believed this, and the stammering of the fragile child's livid lips won the rough fellow's tender love.

The man who, when drunk, beat his wife till the blood came, and committed plenty of cruel deeds, trembled, wept, and could even pray with fervent piety, when—which often happened—the frail little creature, shaken by convulsions, seemed at the point of death. He had undertaken the long journey to the "world's end," not only because the pilgrimage to Compostella promised large profits, but also to urge St. James to cure his child. For his "sweet little Juli's" sake, and to obtain for her a cheap nurse who would be entirely dependent upon him, he burdened himself with the lame ropedancer. But he had no reason to repent this; Gitta had enough to do to lead him by the chain and

answer the questions of the people, while Kuni nursed her charge with rare fidelity, mended the clothing of the father, mother, and child, as well or as badly as she could, and also helped Gitta with the cooking. The sickly, obstinate little girl certainly did not deserve the name of a "sweet" child, yet Kuni devoted herself to it with warm, almost passionate affection.

The vagabond couple did not fail to notice this, and, on the whole, it pleased them. If Cyriax was vexed when little Juli began to show plainly enough that she preferred her nurse even to him, he submitted because the lame girl watched the child through severe attacks of convulsions and fever as if it were her own, and willingly sacrificed her night's rest for its sake. True, he often talked loudly enough in Kuni's presence of the witch potion which the lame girl mixed in the porridge of his child, who loved him better than anything in the world, to estrange it from him and win it to herself.

Kuni paid little heed to these offensive

words; she knew that she had gained the child's love by very different means from the "black art." With far more reason, she dimly felt, the sick child might have been reproached for exerting a secret spell upon her. Her name, "Julie," which she owed to her patron saint, Kuni supposed was the same as "Juliane." Besides, the daughter of the vagabond with the mutilated tongue was born a few days after the death of little Fräulein Peutinger, and this circumstance, when Kuni knew it, seemed significant. Soon after meeting the vagrant pair she had listened to a conversation between two travelling scholars, and learned some strange things. One believed that the old sages were right when they taught that the soul of a dead person continued its existence in other living creatures; for instance, the great Pythagoras had known positively, and proved that his own had dwelt, in former ages, in the breast of the hero Palamedes.

The ropedancer remembered this statement, questioned other Bacchantes about

these things, and heard the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul confirmed. Hence, during many a solitary ride, while the cart rolled slowly along, she pondered over the thought that Juliane's soul had lived again in foolish Julie. How? Why? She did not rack her brains on those points. What had been a fancy, slowly became a fixed belief in the mind thus constantly dwelling upon one idea. At last she imagined that whatever she did for Cyriax's child benefited the soul of the little Augsburg girl, whose life had been shortened by her wicked prayer on the rope.

Yet she had not bought the indulgence in vain. But for that, she believed that Juliane's soul would still be burning in the flames of purgatory. The indulgence of the "Inquisitor" Tetzel had proved its power, and rescued her from the fire. To demonstrate this fact she devised many a proof. For instance, one day the idea entered her mind that foolish Juli's brain was so weak because Juliane, during her brief existence, had used more of hers than was fair.

At first this had been a mere fancy; but, true to her nature, she reverted to it again and again, while in the cart which she alone shared with the child, until it had matured to an immovable conviction. During her changeful, wandering life, she had had no fixed religious principles. But, since the notion had entered her mind that Lienhard would reward her for her love by giving her a share, even though a very small one, of his heart, she had clung tenaciously to it, in spite of all rebuffs and the offensive indifference with which he had treated her. On her sick bed and during her convalescence, she had dwelt upon the fear that her sinful prayer had killed the little wearer of the laurel wreath, until she could say to herself that events had proved it. With the same firmness she now held to the belief that she had found the right idea concerning little Juli's soul.

With the passionate desire to atone to the patrician's daughter for the wrong which she had inflicted upon her, she clasped the vagabond's child to her heart with the love

of the most faithful mother, and her affectionate care seemed to benefit herself as well as the ailing little one. Juli was as devoted to her Kuni as a faithful dog. The kindness which the lame ropedancer showed to the fragile child was lavishly returned to her by a thousand proofs of the warmest attachment.

So Kuni had found one heart which kept its whole treasure of love for her alone, one creature who could not do without her, one fragile human plant to which she could be useful and helpful day and night.

Under the care of a faithful nurse little Juli gradually grew stronger, both physically and mentally. The little girl's wan cheeks began to be rosy, the convulsions and fever attacked her less frequently. Besides the faint "Baba," she learned to babble "Duni," (instead of Kuni) and afterward "Mother," and many other words. At last she talked nearly as well as other children of her age. All this afforded the lame girl a wealth of sweet joys wholly new to her, which afforded

her heart such warmth and solace that, in spite of the cough which tormented her during many an hour of the day and night, she felt happier during her homeward journey with the fierce blasphemer Cyriax, from whom she expected the worst things, than in the brilliant days of her fame as an artist. Doubtless, as they approached Germany, she often wondered what Lienhard would think of her, if he should meet her amid such surroundings, as the companion of so worthless a couple; but the terror that overpowered her was transformed into pleasant satisfaction at the thought that he would approve, nay, praise her conduct, when she could show him the child, and tell him what she had done for it.

This state of affairs had continued until two months before. Then, at Schaffhausen, her darling had suddenly been attacked with violent convulsions, and the feeble intellect, which her love had so toilsomely and faithfully waked from its slumber, only too soon attained eternal peace. In all Kuni's sor-

rowful life she had scarcely experienced any grief so bitter. When she closed the little eyes which had gazed into her pale face so often and so tenderly, it seemed as if the sun, moon, and stars had lost their light, and henceforth she was condemned to live in dreary gloom.

What terrible days had followed the child's death! Cyriax raved as if he had really been seized with the lunacy whose pretence helped him to beg his bread. Besides, he gave himself up to unbridled indulgence in brandy, and, when drunk, he was capable of the most brutal acts. The dead Juli's mother, who, spite of an evil youth and a lenient conscience, was by no means one of the worst of women, had to endure the harshest treatment from her profligate companion.

The blow which had fallen upon him filled him with savage rage, and he longed to inflict some pain upon all who came in his way that they, too, might feel what it was to suffer.

The death of his "sweet little Juli" appeared to have hardened the last tender spot in his brutal soul.

Kuni was the only person toward whom at first he imposed some restraint upon himself. True, without any consideration for the girl's presence, he sometimes asked Gitta why they still burdened themselves with the useless hobbler and did not sell the cart and the donkey. But though there was no lack of good offers for the excellent Spanish beast of burden, he allowed matters to remain as before. If the rage seething in his heart led him, in his drunken frenzy, to make Kuni feel its effects, too, the pleading glance of the blue eyes, still large and expressive, with which she had so often hushed the wailing child, sufficed to soothe him.

Yesterday, for the first time, he had seriously threatened to drive the ropedancer away, and she knew that Cyriax was capable of anything. True, his wife was attached to Kuni, but she had little influence over her vicious husband. So the sick cripple might

only too easily find herself left on the highway.

Still, she had given Cyriax cause for the threat. All day and during the night she had been busy with the unfortunate mother and her twins, and therefore had frequently neglected to fill his brandy bottle. But this could not be helped, and she was not accustomed to think of the future. Whatever her heart urged she did, no matter what might happen. If Cyriax left her in the lurch, she must beg or starve unless chance, which so often mingled in her existence, willed otherwise.

With the child's life the modest happiness which Kuni had enjoyed during the last few months had vanished, not only because the tongueless blasphemer had become a different person, and she sorely missed the delicate little creature who had filled and cheered her heart, but she had also lost the peace of mind which she enjoyed during the existence of her charge.

The young Augsburg maiden, whom she

thought she had bought out of the flames of purgatory, did not appear to her again, but the vagrant's child came all the more frequently, and whenever she showed herself she wailed and wept bitterly. Sweet little Juli's soul must now—whether it had been Juliane's or not—endure the tortures of purgatory, and this pierced Kuni's heart the more deeply the more affectionately she remembered the sickly child.

Ever since she had used a black plaster, given to her at Singen by a quack, the stump of her foot had become sore again, and sharp pain tortured her so cruelly that, especially when the cough racked her emaciated body and she was jolted to and fro in the springless cart over stony roads, she was afraid that she should lose her reason.

At Pforzheim a barber had examined the wound and, shaking his head, pronounced the black plaster a malignant blood poisoner, and when she refused to have the leg amputated, applied a yellow one, which proved no better.

When Cyriax counted up his receipts in

the evening, called to red-haired Gitta his favourite maxim, "Fools never die," and handed to her—Kuni—the larger brandy bottle to fill, she had often summoned up her courage and begged him to buy an indulgence for his sweet little Juli. The result was certain—she knew it from her own experience.

Shortly after the child's death he had thrust his hand into his purse more than once at such an appeal and given money for a few candles, but it had not been possible to persuade him to purchase the paper.

This refusal was by no means due to mere parsimony. Kuni knew what induced him to maintain his resistance so obstinately, for in her presence he had told pock-marked Ratz that he would not take the indulgence gratis. Wherever he might be, his family ought to go, and he did not wish to be anywhere that he would not find Juli.

He did not doubt the continued life of the soul after death, but precisely because he was sure that the gates of paradise would remain closed to him throughout eternity he would

not help to open them for the dead child. When his imagination tortured him with fancies that mice and beetles were leaping and running out of his pockets and the breast of his doublet, he thought that his end was drawing near. If the devil then had power over his soul, his imps might drag him wherever they pleased, if only he might see little Juli there and hear her call "Baba" and "Father." It would lessen the tortures of hell, however severe they might be. Was it possible for him to conceive of any greater folly than to rob himself of this consolation by transporting the child, through the indulgence, to the kingdom of heaven, where he could never see her again. He had accumulated a goodly sum by begging, it is true, but, strangely enough, he did not think of purchasing salvation for himself in order to meet his child again in heaven, instead of amid the flames of purgatory. Though he had become as rich as the Fuggers, paradise, he knew, would still be closed to him. He was not fit for it.

He hated everybody who was rich and respectable. He would rather be with his child in the mire of hell than to go with her to a magnificent garden of paradise where swearing was forbidden, where there was no brandy and no highroad, and which offered only pleasures which were none to him.

So Kuni was forced to see the child remain in the fires of purgatory, which hurt her little less than her aching limb.

At her entrance into The Blue Pike pain and mental suffering had driven her to the verge of despair. But the day which began so sorrowfully was followed by an evening of delight—she owed to it her new meeting with Lienhard.

From childhood she had been homeless, and every quarter of the globe to which a highroad led was her native land. Yet in Spain and during the journey back she had felt a gnawing longing for Germany, nay, nothing had troubled her more than the thought of dying and being buried outside of its frontier. Her mother, a native of the

Rhine country, had given her birth during the fair at Cologne on the Spree; but, whenever homesickness assailed her, it was always the steeples of St. Sebald and St. Ulrich which beckoned to her, and she had longed for the Frank country, the Main, or the richly wooded banks of the Pegnitz. Was this because, in Nuremberg, for the only time in her life, she had been a member of a decorous household, or had the love which, wherever Cyriax's cart and donkey carried her, always drew her heart back to the same ancient city, made it so dear to her?

Probably the latter, for yesterday she had yearned ardently to reach Nuremberg; but since she had seen Lienhard again, she rejoiced that she was in Miltenberg and at The Blue Pike.

Never had he seemed to her so handsome, so manly. Besides, he had spoken to her, listened to her reply, and even given her money with lavish generosity. It was like him! No one else would have been capable of it.

She could live a long time on his three gold florins, if Cyriax abandoned her; yet the unexpected wealth burned in her hand and perplexed her. Did Lienhard no longer know that she would not accept money from him? Had she robbed herself of the certainty that beautified existence; had she failed to show him her superiority to other vagrant girls? Yet no! What he gave her was more, far more, than even a prince bestowed upon an ordinary mendicant. He must measure her by a special standard. If he had only given her the gold with a kind word, not flung it silently into her lap. This half destroyed her pleasure in the present, and the ample supply of money clouded her already disturbed peace of mind still more. Had it been possible, she would have returned the gift as she did the alms at Augsburg. But how was this to be accomplished in the over-crowded inn?

Yet, if she kept the florins, the sacrifice at the convent would lose a large portion of its value, and the good opinion which her act

at Augsburg must have inspired might be shadowed.

For some time before leaving the room in the tavern she had turned the coins restlessly over and over under her kerchief, and meanwhile, as if in a dream, made but evasive answers to the questions and demands of Cyriax and Gitta.

Then she glided nearer to the gentlemen at the table, intending to return Lienhard's gift; but the landlord of The Pike followed her suspiciously, and drove her back to her companions.

Thence she had been called to the sick woman and went out of doors. She found the mother of the twins in the meadow by the Main and eagerly devoted herself to them.

The widow's burning head and gasping breath were no favourable symptoms. She herself felt that her end was approaching. Her tongue was parched. The water in the jug was warm and flat, yet she longed for a cool drink. During the day Kuni had

noticed a well in the kitchen garden, and, in spite of her aching foot, hastened to it at once to draw the cool water. While doing so, the red and white pinks which she had noticed at noon again caught her eye in the starlight night. The sick woman could enjoy their fragrance now, and to-morrow feast her eyes upon their bright colours.

From childhood she had always been fond of flowers. Stealing was prohibited by her father as wicked and dangerous, and she had never transgressed his commands. When she picked up the costly rosary in Nuremberg, she had intended to return it to the owner. But to pluck the flowers and fruit which the Lord caused to grow and ripen for every one was a different thing, and had never troubled her conscience. So she carelessly gathered a few pinks. Three should go to the sick woman, but Lienhard Groland would have the largest and finest. She would try to slip the flowers into his hand, with the money, as a token of her gratitude. But even while saying to herself that these blossoms should be

her last greeting to him, she felt the red spots burning more hotly on her cheeks. Ah, if only he would accept the pinks! Then the most cruel things might happen, she could bear them.

While kneeling before the bed, the waiter, Dietel, noticed her. As she saw him also, she hurried back to the suffering mother as fast as her lame limb would carry her, and raised the jug of fresh water to her parched lips.

This had been a delicious refreshment to the sick woman, and when Kuni saw how much comfort her little service afforded the invalid, her heart grew lighter. Had it been possible she, who was of no importance to any one, would willingly have lain down on the heap of straw in the place of the mother upon whom two young lives depended.

How delightful it was to bring aid! And she possessed the means of being helpful.

So, with sparkling eyes, she pressed the three gold coins into the sufferer's burning

hand, and told her that the village authorities would rear the twins for such a sum.

Then the parched lips of the fevered woman lauded the merciful kindness bestowed by the lame ropedancer—who at that moment seemed to her as powerful as a queen—so warmly and tenderly that Kuni felt the blood again mount into her cheeks—this time with shame at the praise which she deserved so little, yet which rendered her so happy. Finally, the sufferer expressed a desire for a priest, that she might not pass from earth without a sacrament. Her sins oppressed her sorely. She, and she alone, was to blame for Nickel's being hanged. Never in all her life had she been a glutton; but before the birth of the twins the devil had tormented her with a strange longing for roast fowl, which she had been unable to repress and keep to herself. Solely for her gratification, Nickel stole the goose and the hens. In spite of many a bad business in which his reckless nature had involved him, he was a good fellow, with a loving heart.

For her sake he would have tried to steal the ring from the executioner's finger. Now he had gone into the other world unshriven, with the rope about his neck, for though the benefit of the sacrament was usually granted even to the worst criminals, the peasants strung Nickel up to the nearest tree as soon as they caught him, without heeding his entreaties. This made death even harder for her than the thought of the poor little creatures yonder in the bundle of rags. Kuni's charity had provided for the orphans, but her Nickel would find no mercy from the heavenly Judge throughout eternity.

She had sobbed aloud as she spoke, and then writhed in such violent convulsions that Kuni with difficulty prevented her from throwing herself out of the hot straw in the cart upon the damp meadow.

When she grew somewhat calmer, she repeated Nickel's name again and again till it was heartrending to hear her.

CHAPTER IX.

As soon as the sufferer's condition would permit, Kuni left her, went to the window of the taproom in The Blue Pike, and surveyed its inmates.

Most of them were already asleep on heaps of straw, which were raised at the head by chairs turned upside down. The richer guests had gone to the bedrooms, which, however, they were obliged to share with several others. Some of the strollers were lying on the floor with their knapsacks under their heads. A few of the musicians were still lingering over the wine which the travelling merchants and artisans had ordered for them. Others had gone with some of the vagrants into the little wood beyond the meadow, where they danced, fiddled, and sang.

Their loud shouts were borne by the cool night breeze to the sufferer in the cart. The gentlemen from Cologne, without troubling themselves about the boisterous merriment of the burghers or the transformation of the room into a sleeping apartment, were still sitting at the table talking together eagerly.

The dealer in the indulgences, too, had not yet gone to rest. A tall, broad-shouldered sergeant belonging to the escort had just purchased—for the larger part of the zecchins won as his share of the booty in the Italian war—the indulgence which he thought would secure him from the tortures of the fire of purgatory. Before opening the door, he struck his broad breast as though relieved of a heavy burden.

The ropedancer looked after him thoughtfully. The paper had now lightened the sergeant's heart as it had formerly done her own. Would she not have been wiser to give her money for the redemption of Nickel's lost soul than for the orphans, whom the charity of the people would perhaps have

succoured without her? Probably, too, it would have afforded still greater consolation to the poor dying woman, whom nothing troubled so sorely as her guilt for the doom of her unfortunate husband.

Yet, even thus she had succeeded in making the dying mother's departure easier, and what she had commenced she intended to complete at once.

With a tender smile that lent strange beauty to her pallid, grief-worn face she continued her survey.

She had previously noticed an old priest, whose countenance bore the impress of genuine kindness of heart. She soon found him again among the travellers sleeping on the straw; but the old man's slumber was so sound that she felt reluctant to wake him. Among the Dominicans from Cologne, most of whom were also asleep, there were none she would have trusted, nay, she even thought that one was the very person who, shortly before her fall from the rope, had pursued her with persistent importunity. But the

Abbot of St. Ægidius in Nuremberg, who had dined with the ambassadors from his native city, was also a man of benevolent, winning expression. His cheeks were flushed, either by the heat or the wine which he had drunk, but there was a look of attractive kindness upon his well-formed features. When he went through the room a short time before, Kuni had seen him pass his hand caressingly over the fair hair of the pretty little son of a potter's wife from Reren on the Rhine, whose cart was standing outside in the meadow by the Main. He was scarcely of the same mind as the gentleman from Cologne, for he had just waved his plump hand in protest.

Perhaps she might even do him a favour by summoning him. But dared she, a poor vagabond, disturb so distinguished a gentleman at his wine?

Yet there was danger in delay. So she resolved to ask the assistance of the landlady of The Pike, coughed with her handkerchief pressed over her lips, in order not to dis-

turb the sleepers, and turned to leave the room.

But Gitta had just been to see the sick mother, and told Cyriax that Kuni, silly, soft-hearted thing, had wasted her gold coins on the dying woman.

The blasphemer flew into a great rage, muttered a few words to pock-marked Ratz, and then staggered toward their lame travelling companion to bar her passage across the threshold, and ask, in angry, guttural tones, how much of the Groland gold she had flung into the dying woman's grave.

"Is it any business of yours?" was the reply, uttered with difficulty amid her coughing.

"Mine, mine—is it any business of mine?" gasped the tongueless man. Then he raised his heavy fist threateningly and stammered jeeringly: "Not—not a red heller more nor less than my cart—in the name of all the fiends—than my cart is of yours. Four heller pounds, Ratz, and the donkey and cart are yours."

"Done!" cried the vagrant, who already had his money ready; but the tongueless blasphemer chuckled with malicious pleasure:

"Now you have it, fool! Whoever doesn't share with me—you know that—doesn't ride with me."

Then he staggered back to Gitta.

The girl watched him silently for a while. At last she passed her hand quickly across her brow, as if to dispel some unpleasant thought, and shook her burning head, half sadly, half disapprovingly.

She had done a good deed—and this, this—But she had not performed it for the sake of reward, she had only desired to aid the sufferer.

Straightening herself proudly, she limped toward the kitchen.

Here, frequently interrupted by fits of coughing, she told the landlady of The Pike in touching words that the sick mother, whom she had so kindly strengthened with nice broth, desired the sacrament, as her life would soon be over. The Lord Abbot of St.

Ægidius in Nuremberg was still sitting over his wine——

She went no further. The landlady, who, while Kuni was talking, had wiped her pretty flushed face with her apron, pulled the rolled-up white linen sleeves farther down over her plump arms, and gazed with mingled surprise and approval into the girl's emaciated face, interrupted her with the promise to do what she could for the poor woman.

"If it were any one else," she continued, significantly, "I would not venture to try it. But the Abbot of St. Ægidius, in his charity, scarcely asks, when help is needed, whence did you come, who are you, or what do you possess? I know him. Wait here a little while. If he condescends to do it, you can take him to the poor creature at once."

While speaking she smoothed, with two swift motions of her hands, the brown hair which had become a little disordered while bustling to and fro to attend to the business, dipped her hands into the water pail, dried them quickly on her apron, untied it, and

tossed it to the maid. Then she cleared her throat vigorously and left the kitchen.

In reply to the anxious question of her husband, whom she met on the threshold of the room, as to what she was seeking there, she answered firmly, "What is right and pious"; then modestly whispered her request to the abbot.

Her wish was fulfilled without delay, nay, it might really have been supposed that the interruption was very opportune to the distinguished prelate; for, with the brief exclamation, "Imperative official duty!" he rose from the table, and went first with the landlady to Kuni and afterward with the latter to the cart beside the laden potter's wain, whose white tilt gleamed in the darkness.

The landlady had undertaken to send to the sexton, whose house was near, that he might immediately obtain everything the abbot needed for the dying woman's viaticum.

Kuni told the sufferer what an exalted servant of the Church was ready to receive her confession and give her the sacrament.

Then she whispered that she might mention Nickel's burdened soul to the abbot. Whatever happened, she could now depart from earth in peace.

Reserving for herself half of the flowers she had gathered in the garden she glided away, in order not to disturb the dying woman's confession.

CHAPTER X.

At the edge of the meadow Kuni paused to reflect. She would gladly have flung herself down on the dewy grass to rest, stretched at full length on the cool turf. She was worn out, and her foot ached and burned painfully after her long walk in the warm August night; but something else exerted a still stronger attraction over her poor longing heart; the desire to see Lienhard again and give him the pinks as a token of gratitude for so much kindness.

He was still sitting with the other gentlemen at the table in front of the tavern. One of the torches threw its light full on his manly face. Kuni knew that he could not see her in the darkness surrounding her figure, yet it seemed as though she was meeting the gaze

of his sparkling dark eyes. Now he was speaking. How she longed to know what he said. Summoning up her courage, she glided along in the shadow of the wall and sat down behind the oleander bush on the sharp edge of the tub. No one noticed her, but she was afraid that a fit of coughing might betray her presence, so she pressed her apron firmly over her lips and sat straining her ears to listen. In spite of the violent aching of her foot and the loud rattling in her chest, she thought it a specially favourable dispensation of Providence that she had found her way here just at this moment; for Lienhard was still speaking. The others had asked him to tell them connectedly how the beautiful Katharina Harsdörffer had become his wife, in spite of the opposition of her stern father and though the Honourable Council had punished him for such insubordination with imprisonment and exile.

He had already related this in detail when Kuni came to listen. Now, pointing to Wilibald Pirckheimer, who sat opposite, he

went on with his story, describing how, thanks to the mediation of the latter and of the great artist, Albrecht Dürer, he had obtained an audience at Innsbruck with the Emperor Maximilian, how the sovereign had interceded personally in behalf of himself and his betrothal, and how, in consequence of this royal intervention, he had attained the goal of his wishes.

"Our Honourables," he concluded, "now willingly permitted me to return home, and Hans Harsdörffer, Katharina's father—Heaven rest his soul—relinquished his opposition to our marriage. Perhaps he would have done so earlier, but for the keen antagonism which, owing to their totally different natures, had arisen between the stern man and my light-hearted father, and displayed itself in the Council as well as in all the affairs of life. Not until his old opponent, to whom I owed my existence, was on his death-bed, did Herr Hans clasp hands with him in reconciliation, and consent to our betrothal."

"And I know," Wilibald Pirckheimer in-

terrupted, "that among the many obstacles which his foes placed in his path, and which clouded his active life, you two, and your loyal love, gave him more light and greater consolation than anything else. I have often heard him gladly acknowledge this, and as for you, friend Lienhard——"

"I know," replied the young Honourable modestly, checking him, "that he was right in deeming the immature youth, which I was at the time of my first wooing, unworthy of his daughter."

"Though you had been the peer in strength and beauty of the valiant Achilles, and in wisdom of the subtle Ulysses, son of Laertes, I would not contradict you," interrupted Pirckheimer; "for, gentlemen, this gallant husband's wife is a jewel of a peculiar kind. Nuremberg is proud of calling Frau Katharina her daughter. Far as the German language is spoken, her equal would be sought in vain."

"You are an enviable man," said little Dr. Eberbach, turning to Lienhard. "But

probably you will permit me one question. Even when a boy, as we heard, you loved the child Katharina. As a youth, you took this love across the Alps to Padua and Bologna. But when, like the noble Virgil, I perceive that 'Nowhere is there aught to trust—nowhere,'* and find that the esteemed Catullus's words, 'No man passes through life without error,'† are verified, I would fain learn whether in Italy also you held fast, in small things as well as great ones, to the—among us men—rare bird of the fidelity sworn to the woman whom we love. I, who compared to you, am like a faun with pointed ears beside the handsome Ares, nevertheless know by experience how easily the glowing eyes of that country kindle conflagrations. Was the armour of a former love really strong enough to guard your heart from every flame, even before any vow bound you to the child whom you chose so early for the companion of your life?"

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* Virg. Æn. iv, 373. † Catull. Dist. I, 5.

"It was the same before the priest's consecration as afterward," replied the young Councillor, gravely and firmly.

Then, changing his manner, he held out his brimming glass toward the Thuringian and gaily continued:

"It ought not to seem so amazing to a man of your learning, my incredulous Herr Doctor. Surely your far-famed Propertius says, 'Love is benefited by many things, a faithful nature and resolute persistence.'* Believe me, doctor, even without the counsel of your experienced Roman, I should have kept faith with the lovely child at home. From my boyhood, Katharina was to me *the* woman, the one above all others, the worthy Tryphon, my teacher of Greek in Bologna, would have said. My heart's darling has always been my light, as Helios was that of the Greeks, though there were the moon and so many planets and stars besides."

"And the vagrant we saw just now, on

* Propertius, Eleg. II, 20, 27.

whom you bestowed a golden shower of remembrance as Father Zeus endowed the fair Danaë?" asked Doctor Peutinger of Augsburg, shaking his finger mischievously at his young friend. "We humanists follow the saying of Tibullus: 'Whoever confesses let him be forgiven,'* and know the world sufficiently to be aware that within the walls of Ilium and without enormities are committed." †

"A true statement," replied Lienhard. "It probably applies to me as much as to the young girl, but there was really nothing between us which bore the most distant resemblance to a love intrigue. As a magistrate, I acquitted her of a trivial misdemeanour which she committed while my wedding procession was on its way to the altar. I did this because I was unwilling to have that happy hour become a source of pain to any one. In return, she grew deeply attached to me, who can tell whether from mere grati-

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* Tibull., Eleg. I, 6, 29. † Horace, Epist. I, 2, 16.

tude, or because a warmer feeling stirred her strange heart? At that time she was certainly a pretty, dainty creature, and yet, as truly as I hope to enjoy the love of my darling wife for many a year, there was nothing, absolutely nothing, between me and the blue-eyed, dark-haired wanderer which the confessor might not have witnessed. I myself wonder at this, because I by no means failed to see the ropedancer's peculiar changeful charms, and the tempter pointed them out to me zealously enough. Besides, she has no ordinary nature. She had accomplished really marvellous feats in her art, until at Augsburg, during the Reichstag, when in the Emperor's presence, she risked the most daring ventures—"

"Could it be the same person who, before our poor Juliane's eyes, had the awful fall which frightened the child so terribly?" asked Doctor Peutinger earnestly.

"The very same," replied Lienhard in a tone of sincere pity; but the Augsburg doctor continued, sighing:

"With that sudden fright, which thrilled her sensitive nature to its inmost depths, began the illness of the angel whose rich, loving heart throbbed so tenderly for you also, Herr Lienhard."

"As mine did for the peerless child," replied the young Councillor with eager warmth. "While Juliane, who sickened at the sight of the girl dancing on the edge of the grave, was pointing out to me some pages in the manuscript of Lucian, which I was to take from you to Herr Wilibald yonder, the unfortunate performer met with the terrible accident. We thought that she was killed, but, as if by a miracle, she lived. Ropedancing, of course, was over forever, as she had lost a foot. This, we supposed, would tend to her welfare and induce her to lead a regular, decorous life; but we were mistaken. In spite of her lameness, Kuni's restless nature drove her back to the highroad. Yet she would have been at liberty to remain in the convent as a lay sister without taking the vows."

"My wife, too, had opened our house to her for Juliane's sake," added Doctor Peutinger. "The sick child could not get the fall which had frightened her so terribly out of her head. Her compassionate heart was constantly occupied with the poor girl, and when she urged her mother to provide for her, she willingly gratified her wish and often inquired about the sufferer's health. How Juliane rejoiced when she heard that the bold and skilful dancer's life would be saved! But when, through the abbess, my wife offered her a situation in our home, the vagabond disdained what the mother and daughter had planned for her, Heaven knows how kindly."

"She treated the gift which we—my wife and I—left in the convent for her in the same way," added Lienhard. "Why did she refuse the aid I offered no less willingly? Probably because she was too proud to accept alms from a man from whom her ardent heart vainly desired something better."

Here Lienhard Groland hesitated, and it

sounded like a confession as he eagerly continued:

"And, gentleman, she often seemed to me well worthy of a man's desire. Why should I deny it? Within and without the walls of Troy—we have just heard it—sin is committed, and had not the image of another woman stood between us, as the Alps rise between Germany and Italy—perhaps— But of what avail are conjectures? Will you believe that there were hours when I felt as though I ought to make some atonement to the poor girl?"

"In your place I should have done it long ago, for the benefit of both," protested little Doctor Eberbach merrily. "The commands of conscience should be obeyed, even when, by way of exception, it requires something pleasant. But how grave you look, sir. No offence! You are one of the rare specimens of featherless birds endowed with reason, who unite to the austerity of Cato the amiability of Titus."

"All due honour to Cato," added Wilibald

Pirckheimer with a slight bend of his stately head; "but in my young days we had a better understanding of the art of reconciling stern duty with indulgent compassion, when dealing with a beautiful Calypso whom our sternness threatened to wound. But everything in the good old days was not better than at the present time, and that you, whom I honour as the most faithful of husbands, may not misunderstand me, Lienhard: To bend and to succumb are two different things."

"Succumb!" Sir Hans von Obernitz, the Nuremberg magistrate, here interposed indignantly. "A Groland, who, moreover, is blessed with a loyal, lovely wife, succumb to the sparkling eyes of a vagabond wanton! The Pegnitz would flow up the castle cliff first. I should think we might have less vulgar subjects to discuss."

"The daring, skilful ropedancer certainly does not belong to the latter," Doctor Peutinger eagerly retorted. "Besides, who would not desire to know how the free, hot-blooded

daughter of the highway settled the account with you, friend Lienhard? Love disdained is said to be the mother of hatred, and from the days of Potiphar's wife has often caused cruel vengeance. Had this girl whom Sir Hans holds in such light esteem really possessed an evil nature, like others of her class——"

"That she does not," Lienhard Groland here warmly interrupted the Augsburg guest. "Whatever Kuni may lack, and whatever errors she may have committed, she is, and will remain a rare creature, even among the few whose lofty spirit can not be bowed or broken by the deepest calamity. When I met her here again at The Blue Pike, among the most corrupt vagabonds, ill and poor, perhaps already the victim of death, I thought it a fitting time to renew the gift which she had refused. I would gladly do more for the poor girl, and my wife at home certainly would not be vexed; she, too, is fond of Kuni, and—I repeat it—this girl has a good, nay, the best nature. If, instead of among

vagabonds, she had been born in a respectable household——"

Here the young envoy was suddenly interrupted. His table companions also raised their heads in surprise—a strange noise echoed through the night air.

Little Doctor Eberbach started up in affright, Hans von Obernitz, the Nuremberg magistrate, grasped the hilt of his sword, but Doctor Schedel instantly perceived that the sound which reached his aged ears was nothing but a violent, long-repressed fit of coughing. He and the other gentlemen were gazing at the oleander tree whence, before any one approached it, a groan of pain was heard.

The experienced physician shook his white locks gravely and said:

"Whoever uttered that is near the end of his sufferings."

He made a movement to rise as he spoke; he felt that his help was needed.

But another incident diverted the attention of his companions and himself.

CHAPTER XI.

DIETEL, the waiter, had at last been released from his confinement in the cellar, and instantly began the search for the thief in the garden with twofold zeal.

Without considering how long a time had passed since he first tried to bring the culprit into the clutches of the law, he had resumed the pursuit where it was interrupted. As a thoughtless child whose bird has flown from the cage looks into the water jug to find it, he had turned the light of his lantern upon places where a kitten could not have hidden itself, and had even been to the meadow on the bank of the Main to seek Kuni with the widow of the thief Nickel; but here the sacrament was just being given to the sufferer, and to interrupt such a ceremony would have been

a great crime. His eyes were keen, and the red pinks had gleamed from the straw on which the dying woman lay in the light of the lantern, whose long pole the sexton had thrust into the soft earth of the meadow. Those flowers must have come from the garden of the landlady of The Pike, and she valued her pinks more than anything else. The rope-dancer had gathered them for the sick woman, and certainly had not stopped at that one act of theft. How far these vagabonds' impudence went! But he, whose duty it was to look after the property of The Blue Pike, would spoil their pleasure in thieving.

The dog Phylax had soon put him on the trail, and before any of the gentlemen could reach the groaning person Dietel's triumphant shout rang from behind the oleander:

"Now we've caught the pilferer, and we'll make an example of her!"

His first glance had fallen on the little bunch of pinks in the girl's hand, and the vein on his forehead swelled with wrath at this damage to his mistress's favourite flowers.

But when he shook the culprit by the shoulder and, to his surprise, met with no resistance, he threw the light of the lantern upon her face, and what he saw there suddenly troubled him, for the girl's lips, chin, and dress were covered with bright blood, and her head drooped on one side as if it had lost its support.

This frightened him, and instead of continuing to boast of his success, he called for help.

The Nuremberg gentlemen soon surrounded Kuni, and Doctor Hartmann Schedel told the waiter to carry her, with the aid of his assistants, summoned by his shout, into the house and provide her with a comfortable bed.

Dietel obeyed the command without delay—nay, when he heard the famous leech whisper to the other gentlemen that the sufferer's life was but a failing lamp, his feelings were completely transformed. All the charity in his nature began to stir and grew more zealous as he gazed at Kuni's face, distorted

by pain. The idea of giving up to her his own neat little room behind the kitchen seemed like a revelation from St. Eoban, his patron. She should rest in his bed. The wanderer who, a few years ago, had scattered her gold so readily and joyously for the pleasure of others certainly would not poison it. Her misery seemed to him a touching proof of the transitory nature of all earthly things. Poor sufferer! Yet she ought to find recovery on his couch, if anywhere; for he had surrounded it with images of the saints, pious maxims, and little relics, bought chiefly from the venders who frequented the tavern. Among them was a leather strap from St. Elizabeth's shoe, whose healing power he had himself tested during an attack of bilious fever.

The burden which he shared with his assistants was a light one, but he was not to reach his destination without delay—the little bunch of pinks fell from the hand of the unconscious girl, and Dietel silently picked up the stolen property which had just roused his

wrath to such a degree, and placed it carefully on the senseless sufferer's bosom.

The second hinderance was more serious. Cyriax had heard that Kuni was dying, and fearing that he might be obliged to pay the funeral expenses he stuttered to the bystanders, with passionate gestures, that an hour ago he had discharged the cripple whom he had dragged about with him, out of sheer sympathy, long enough. She was nothing more to him now than the cock in the courtyard, which was crowing to greet the approach of dawn.

But the landlord of The Pike and others soon forced Cyriax out of the way. Kuni was laid on Dietel's bed, and the gray-haired leech examined her with the utmost care.

The landlady of The Pike helped to undress her, and when the good woman, holding her apron to her eyes from which tears were streaming, opened the door again and the Abbot of St. Ægidius approached the couch, to render aid to the dying for the second time that night, he saw by Hartmann

Schedel's face that he had not come too soon.

The ropedancer had recovered consciousness, and the kind prelate's presence was a solace to her. The confession lasted a long time, and the story which she had to confide to the priest must have been as strange as it was interesting, for the abbot listened eagerly and with evident emotion. When he had performed the duties of his office he remained alone for a time; he could not immediately regain a mood in which he cared to rejoin the others. He did not ask for the gentlemen from Cologne; those from Nuremberg, whom he sought, had returned to the table in front of the tavern long before.

The waves of the Main were now reflecting the golden light of the morning sun. Dewdrops glittered on the grass and flowers in the meadow with the cart, and in the landlady's little garden. Carriers' men were harnessing the freshly groomed bays to the pole. The brass rings on the high collars of the stallions jingled loudly and merrily, and long

whiplashes cracked over the four- and six-horse teams which were beginning the day's journey along the highroad.

But even the rattling of the carts and the trampling of the horses' hoofs could not rouse the Cologne professors, who, with their clerical companions, had gone to rest, and slept in darkened rooms until late into the morning. Most of the humbler guests had already left their straw beds.

Cyriax was one of the first who followed the road. He had sold his cart and donkey, and wanted to burden his red-haired wife with his possessions, but as she resolutely refused he had taken the bundle on his own lazy shoulders. Now he dragged himself and his new load onward, swearing vehemently, for Ratz had remained with the cart in Miltenberg, where the sham lunatic no longer found it safe to stay. This time it was he who was obliged to pull his wife along by the chain, for she had long refused, as if fairly frantic, to desert the dying girl who had nursed her child so faithfully. Again and again the doubly desolate

woman looked back toward the companion whom she had abandoned in her suffering until they reached Frankfort. There Gitta left Cyriax and accompanied Ratz. The cart in which her child had lived and died, not its repulsive owner, induced her to sever the bond which, for nine years, had bound her to the blasphemer.

The travelling scholars set off singing merrily; but the strolling musicians waited for the ship to sail down the Main, on whose voyage they could earn money and have plenty to drink.

The vagrants tramped along the highway, one after another, without troubling themselves about the dying ropedancer.

"Everybody finds it hard enough to bear his own cross," said Jungel, seizing his long crutches. Only "Dancing Gundel" lingered in Miltenberg through sympathy in the fate of the companion who had reached the height of fame, while she, the former "Phyllis," had gone swiftly downhill. It was a Christian duty, she said to the blind boy who begged

their bread, not to let Kuni, who had once held so lofty a position, take the last journey without a suitable escort. When she heard that her former companion had received the sacrament, she exclaimed to her blind son, while slicing garlic into the barley porridge: "She will now be at rest. We shall earn a pretty penny at the mass in Frankfort if you can only manage to look as sorrowful when you hold out your hand as you do now!"

The monks, the dealer in indulgences, the burghers and artisans who were just preparing to embark for the voyage down the Main, gazed in bewilderment at the distinguished gentlemen who, incredible as it seemed, had actually—for Dietel said so—foregone their morning nap for the sake of a vagabond girl. The feather-curler shook his head as if something marvellous had happened when he heard the ambassador of the Honourable Council of his own native city, the distinguished Herr Lienhard Groland, say to old Doctor Schedel:

"I will wait here with you, my venerable

friend. Since the poor girl can live only a few hours longer, I can join the others, if I hurry, before they leave Frankfort."

"That's right, Lienhard," cried Wilibald Pirckheimer, and the Abbot of St. Ægidius added approvingly:

"You will thereby do something which is pleasing in the sight of Heaven. Yes, gentlemen, I repeat it: there are few deathbeds beside which I have found so little reason to be ashamed of the fate of being a mortal as by the humble couch of this vagabond girl. If, before the judgment seat above, intention and faith are weighed with the same scales as works, few who close their eyes behind silken curtains will be so sure of a favourable sentence as this poorest of the poor."

"Did the girl really keep no portion of Herr Lienhard's rich gift for herself?" asked the Nuremberg imperial magistrate.

"Nothing," replied the abbot. "She gave the whole, down to her last copper, to the stranger, though she herself must remain here, poor, lame, and deserted—and she had only

met the sick woman by accident upon the highway. My duty forbids me to repeat the details, and how she bore herself even while at Augsburg, but, thanks to the confession which I have just received, I shall count this morning among those never to be forgotten. O gentlemen, death is a serious matter, and intercourse with the dying is the best school for the priest. Then the inmost depths of the soul are opened to him."

"And," observed Wilibald Pirckheimer, "I think the psychologist would then learn that, the deeper we penetrate the human breast, the darker is the spectacle."

"Yes, my learned friend," the abbot answered, "but we also perceive that the deepest and darkest shafts contain the purest specimens of gold and silver ore."

"And were you really permitted to find such in this neglected vagabond, reverend sir?" asked Doctor Eberbach, with an incredulous smile.

"As certainly," answered the prelate with repellent dignity, "as that the Saviour was

right when he called those who were pure in heart blessed above those who were wise and overflowing with knowledge!"

Then, without waiting for the Thuringian's answer, he hastily turned to the young ambassador and begged him to grant the dying girl, who clung to him with tender devotion, a brief farewell.

"Willingly," replied Lienhard, requesting the physician to accompany him.

The latter had just beckoned Doctor Peutinger to his side, to examine with him the indulgence which he had found under the kerchief crossed over the sick girl's bosom. It did not secure redemption from the flames of purgatory for the ropedancer's soul, as the gentlemen expected, but for another, and that other—the learned humanist and Imperial Councillor would not believe his own eyes—was his beloved, prematurely lost child. There, in large letters, was "Juliane Peutinger of Augsburg."

Astonished, almost bewildered, the usually quiet statesman expressed his amazement.

The other gentlemen were preparing to examine the paper with him, when the abbot, without betraying the secret of Kuni's heart, which she had confided to him in her confession, told Juliane's father that the rope-dancer had scarcely left the convent ere she gave up both the Emperor's gift and the viaticum—in short, her whole property, which would have been large enough to support her a long time—in order to do what she could for the salvation of the child for whom her soul was more concerned than for her own welfare.

The astonished father's eyes filled with tears of grateful emotion, and when Lienhard went with the gray-haired leech to the dying girl Doctor Peutinger begged permission to accompany them. The physician, however, requested him to remain away from the sufferer, who would be disturbed by the sight of a strange face. Then Peutinger charged his young friend to give Kuni his kind greetings and thank her for the love with which she had remembered his dear child.

The young Councillor silently followed the physician to the sick bed, at whose head leaned a Gray Sister, who was one of the guests of The Blue Pike and had volunteered to nurse the patient.

The nun shook her head sorrowfully as the two men crossed the threshold. She knew how the dying look, and that the hand of death already touched this sufferer. Yet her kind, colourless face, framed by the white sides of her cap, quickly regained its usual quiet, placid expression.

The regular features, now slightly flushed with the fever, of the patient in her charge, on the contrary, were constantly varying in expression. She had noticed the entrance of the visitors, and when she opened her sparkling blue eyes and saw the person to whom her poor heart clung with insatiable yearning they were filled with a sunny radiance, and a smile hovered round her lips.

She had known that he would come, that he would not let her die without granting her one more glance.

Now she would fain have nodded to him and expressed in very, very appropriate words the delight, the embarrassment, the gratitude which filled her soul, but her panting chest could give no breath for utterance. Nay, extreme exhaustion even prevented the movement of her lips. But her heart and brain were by no means inactive. A wealth of internal and external experiences, long since forgotten, rose before her mind. First she fancied that she saw Lienhard, as at their first meeting, approaching the garlanded door of St. Sebald's with his beautiful bride, arrayed in her wedding robes. Then she was transported to the court room and felt his hand stroke her hair. The hours at Frau Schürstab's when she had awaited his visits with an anxious heart came back to her memory. Then she again saw herself upon the rope. Lienhard was toying with the little elf below. But what she beheld this time was far from awakening new wicked wishes, for Juliane once more wore her laurel crown and beckoned kindly to her like a dear, familiar friend. Finally,

pale little Juli appeared, as if shrouded in mists. Last of all, she saw herself filling the jug for the sick woman and gathering the red pinks for her and Lienhard in the landlady's little garden by the shimmering starlight. The flowers, whose fragrance was too strong, yet which she had not the strength to remove, lay on the coverlet before her. They were intended for Lienhard, and as she stretched her slender fingers toward them and tried to clasp them she succeeded. She even found strength to hold out her right hand to him with a beseeching glance. And lo! ere her arm fell again the proud man had seized the flowers. Then she saw him fasten the pinks on the breast of his dark doublet, and heard the thrill of deep emotion in his voice, as he said:

"I thank you, dear Kuni, for the beautiful flowers. I will keep them. Your life was a hard one, but you have borne the burden bravely. I saw this clearly, and not I alone. I am also to thank you and give you very friendly remembrances in the name of Doctor

Peutinger, of Augsburg, little Juliane's father. He will think of you as a mistress of your art, a noble, high-minded girl, and I—I shall certainly do so."

He clasped her burning hand as he spoke; but at these words she felt as she had probably done a few hours before, when, hidden behind the oleander, she listened to the conversation in which he mentioned her kindly. Again a warm wave of joy seemed to surge upward in her breast, and she fancied that her heart was much too small for such a wealth of rapture, and it was already overflowing in hot waves, washing all grief far, far away.

Her gift had been accepted.

The red pinks looked at her from his doublet, and she imagined that everything around was steeped in rosy light, and that a musical tinkling and singing echoed in her ears.

Never had she experienced such a feeling of happiness.

Now she even succeeded in moving her lips, and the man who still held her little

burning hand clasped in his first heard his own name very faintly uttered; then her parched lips almost inaudibly repeated the exclamation: "Too late!" and again, "Too late!"

The next instant she pressed her left hand upon her panting breast. The rosy hue around her blended with the red tint of the pinks, and another hæmorrhage bore the restless wanderer to that goal where every mortal journey ends.

THE END.

GEORG EBERS

A QUESTION

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS

A QUESTION

Translated from the German by
Mary J. Safford

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Authorized Edition.

To Frau Fanny Puricelli

IN TOKEN OF

AN OLD AND CHANGELESS FRIENDSHIP

PRELUDE.

In the Art-Palace on green Isar's strand,
Before one picture long I kept my seat,
It held me spellbound by some magic band,
Nor when my home I sought, could I forget.

A year elapsed, came winter's frost and snow,
'Twas rarely now we saw the bright sun shine,
I plucked up courage and cried: "Be it so!"
Then southward wandered with those I call mine.

Like birds of passage built we there a nest
On a palm-shaded shore, all steeped in light,
Life was a holiday, enjoyed with zest
And grateful hearts, the while it winged its flight.

Oft on the sea's wide purplish-blue expanse,
With ever new delight I fixed my eyes,
Alma Tadema's picture, at each glance
Recalled to mind, a thousand times would rise.

Once a day dawned, glad as a bride's fair face,
Perfume, and light, and joy it did enfold,
Then — without search, flitted from out of space
Words for the tale that my friend's picture told.

A QUESTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOUSE-KEEPER AND THE STEWARD.

"SALT sea-water or oil, it's all the same to you! Haven't I put my lamp out long ago? Doesn't the fire on the hearth give light enough? Are your eyes so drowsy that they don't see the dawn shining in upon us more and more brightly? The olives are not yet pressed, and the old oil is getting toward the dregs. Besides, you know how much fruit those abominable thieves have stolen. But sparrows will carry grain into the barn before you'll try to save your master's property!"

So Semestre, the ancient house-keeper of Lysander of Syracuse, scolded the two maids, Chloris and Dorippe, who, unheeding the smoking wicks of their lamps, were wearily turning the hand-mills.

Dorippe, the younger of the two, grasped her disordered black tresses, over which thousands of rebellious little hairs seemed to weave a veil of mist, drew from the mass of curls falling on her neck a bronze arrow, with which she extinguished the feeble light of both lamps, and, turning to the house-keeper, said:

"There, then! We can't yet tell a black thread from a white one, and I must put out the lamps, as if this rich house were a beggar's hut. Two hundred jars of shining oil were standing in the storehouses a week ago. Why did the master let them be put on the ship and taken to Messina by his brother and Mopsus?"

"And why isn't the fruit gathered yet?" asked Chloris. "The olives are overripe, and the thieves have an easy task, now the watchmen have gone to Messina as rowers. We must save by drops, while we own more gnarled olive-trees than there are days in the year. How many jars of oil might be had from the fruit that has

dropped on the ground alone! The harvest at neighbor Protarch's was over long ago, and if I were like Lysander—"

"There would probably be an end of saving," cried the house-keeper, interrupting the girl. "Well, I confess it wasn't easy for me to part with the golden gift of the gods, but what could I do? Our master's brother, Alciphron, wanted it, and there was a great barter. Alciphron is clever, and has a lucky hand, in which the liquid gold we press from the olives with so much toil, and keep so carefully, becomes coined metal. He's like my own child, for I was his nurse. Here in the country we increase our riches by care, patience and frugality, while the city merchant must have far-seeing eyes, and know how to act speedily. Even when a boy, my Alciphron was the wisest of Dionysius's three sons, and, if there was anything sweet to be divided, always knew how to get the largest share. When his mother was alive, she once told the lad to give her the best of some freshly-

baked cakes, that she might take it to the temple for an offering, and what was his answer? 'It will be well for me to taste them all, that I may be certain not to make a mistake;' and when Clytemnestra—"

"Is Alciphron younger than our poor master?" interrupted Dorippe.

"They were sesame cakes with honey," replied the house-keeper, whose hearing was impaired by age, and who therefore frequently misunderstood words uttered in a low tone. "Is the linen ready for the wash?"

"I didn't ask about the cakes," replied Dorippe, exchanging a mischievous glance with Chloris; "I only wanted to know—"

"You girls are deaf; I've noticed it a long time," interrupted the house-keeper. "You've grown hard of hearing, and I know why. Hundreds of times I've forbidden you to throw yourselves on the dewy grass in the evening, when you were heated by dancing. How often I get absurd answers, when I ask you anything!"

The girls both laughed merrily.

The higher voice of one mingled harmoniously with the deeper tones of her companion, and two pairs of dark eyes again met, full of joyous mirth, for they well knew who was deaf, and who had quicker hearing than even the nightingale, which, perched on the green fig-tree outside, was exultingly hailing the sunrise, now with a clear, flute-like warble, now with notes of melancholy longing.

The house-keeper looked with mingled astonishment and anger at the two laughing girls, then clapped her hands loudly, exclaiming:

"To work, wenches! You, Chloris, prepare the morning meal; and you, Dorippe, see if the master wants anything, and bring fresh wood for the fire. Stop your silly giggling, for laughing before sunrise causes tears at evening. I suppose the jests of the vineyard watchmen are still lingering in your heads. Now go, and don't touch food till you've arranged your hair."

The girls, nudging each other, left the women's apartment, into which the dawn was now shining more brightly through the open roof.

It was a stately room, surrounded by marble columns, which bore witness to the owner's wealth, for the floor was beautifully adorned with bright-hued pictures, mosaic work executed in colored stones by an artist from Syracuse. They represented the young god Dionysius, the Hyades surrounding him, and in colored groups all the gifts of the divinities who watch over fields and gardens, as well as those of the Nysian god. Each individual design, as well as the whole picture, was inclosed in a framework of delicate lines. The hearth, over which Semestre now bent, to fan the glimmering embers with a goose-wing, was made of yellow marble.

Dorippe now returned, curtly said that the master wanted to be helped into the open air, when the sun was higher, and brought, as she had been ordered, a fresh

supply of gnarled olive-branches, and pine-cones, which, kindling rapidly, coaxed the wood to unite its blaze with theirs.

Glittering sparks flew upward from the crackling branches toward the open roof, and with them a column of warm smoke rose straight into the pure, cool morning air; but as the door of the women's apartment now opened, the draught swept the gray, floating pillar sideways, directly toward Semestre, who was fanning the flames with her goose-wing.

Coughing violently, she wiped her eyes with the edge of her blue peplum, and glanced angrily at the unbidden guest who ventured to enter the women's apartment at this hour.

As soon as she recognized the visitor she nodded pleasantly, though with a certain touch of condescension, and rose from her stool, but instantly dropped back on it again, instead of going forward to meet the new-comer. Then she planted herself still more firmly on her seat, and, instead of

uttering a friendly greeting, coughed and muttered a few unintelligible words.

"Give me a little corner by your fire, it's a cold morning," cried the old man in a deep voice. "Helios freezes his people before he comes, that they may be doubly grateful for the warmth he bestows."

"You are right," replied Semestre, who had only understood a few of the old man's words; "people ought to be grateful for a warm fire; but why, at your age, do you go out so early, dressed only in your chiton, without cloak or sandals, at a season when the buds have scarcely opened on the trees. You people yonder are different from others in many respects, but you ought not to go without a hat, Jason; your hair is as white as mine."

"And wholly gone from the crown," replied the old man, laughing. "It's more faithful to you women; I suppose out of gratitude for the better care you bestow. I need neither hat, cloak, nor sandals! An old countryman doesn't fear the morning

chill. When a boy, I was as white as your master's little daughter, the fair-faced Xanthe, but now head, neck, arms, legs, every part of me not covered by the woolen chiton, is brown as a wine-skin before it's hung up in the smoke, and the dark hue is like a protecting garment, nay better, for it helps me bear not only cold, but heat. There's nothing white about me now, except the beard on my chin, the scanty hair on my head, and, thank the gods, these two rows of sound teeth."

Jason, as he spoke, passed his hard, brown finger over the upper and then the under row of his teeth; but the housekeeper, puckering her mouth in the attempt to hide many a blemish behind her own lips, answered:

"Your teeth are as faithful to you as our hair is to us, for men know how to use them more stoutly than women. Now show what you can do. We have a nice curd porridge, seasoned with thyme, and some dried lamb for breakfast. If the girl

hurries, you needn't wait long. Every guest, even the least friendly, is welcome to our house."

"I didn't come here to eat," replied the old man; "I've had my breakfast. There's something on my mind I would like to discuss with the clever house-keeper, nay, I ought to say the *mistress* of this house, and faithful guardian of its only daughter."

Semestre turned her wrinkled face towards the old man, opened her eyes to their widest extent, and then called eagerly to Dorippe, who was busied about the hearth, "We want to be alone!"

The girl walked slowly toward the door, and tried to conceal herself behind the projecting pillars to listen, but Semestre saw her, rose from her seat, and drove her out of doors with her myrtle-staff, exclaiming: "Let no one come in till I call. Even Xanthe must not interrupt us."

"You won't stay alone, for Aphrodite and all the Loves will soon join such a pair," cried the girl, as she sprang across the

threshold, banging the door loudly behind her.

"What did she say?" asked Semestre, looking suspiciously after the maiden. "The vexations one has to endure from those girls, Jason, can't be described, especially since they've grown deaf."

"Deaf?" asked the old man in astonishment.

"Yes, they scarcely understand a word correctly, and even Xanthe, who has just reached her seventeenth year, is beginning to be hard of hearing."

A smile flitted over Jason's face, and, raising his voice to a louder tone, he said, flatteringly:

"Every one can't have senses as keen as yours, Semestre; have you time to listen to me?"

The house-keeper nodded assent, leaned against the column nearest the hearth, rested both hands on her staff, and bent forward to intimate that she would listen attentively, and did not wish to lose a single word.

Jason stood directly opposite, and, while thus measuring each other with their eyes, Semestre looked like a cautious cat awaiting the attack of the less nimble but stronger shepherd's dog.

"You know," Jason began, "that when, long ago, we two, you as nurse and I as steward, came to this place, our present masters' fine estates belonged undivided to their father. The gods gave the old man three sons. The oldest, Alciphron, whom you nursed and watched through his boyhood, went to a foreign land, became a great merchant in Messina, and, after his father's death, received a large inheritance in gold, silver and the city house at the port. The country estates were divided between Protarch and Lysander. My master, as the elder of the two, obtained the old house; yours built this new and elegant mansion. One son, the handsome Phaon, has grown up under our roof, while yours shelters the lovely Xanthe. My master has gone to Messina, not only to

sell our oil and yours, but to speak to the guardian of a wealthy heiress, of whom his brother had written. He wants her for Phaon's wife; but I think Phaon was created for Xanthe and Xanthe for him. There's nothing lacking, except to have Hymen—"

"To have Hymen unite them," interrupted Semestre. "There's no hurry about heiresses; they don't let themselves be plucked like blackberries. If she has scorned her country suitor, it may well seem desirable to Protarch and all of you that Xanthe should prove more yielding, for then our property would be joined with yours."

"It would be just the same as during Dionysius's lifetime."

"And you alone would reap the profit."

"No, Semestre, it would be an advantage to both us and you; for, since your master had that unlucky fall from the high wall of the vineyard, the ruler's eye is lacking here, and many things don't go as they ought."

"People see what they want to see," cried Semestre. "Our estates are no worse managed than yours."

"I only meant to say—"

"That your Phaon seems to you well fitted to supply my master's place. I think differently, and, if Lysander continues to improve, he'll learn to use his limbs again."

"An invalid needs rest, and, since the deaths of your mistress and mine, quarrelling never ceases—"

"We never disturb the peace."

"And quarrelling is even more unpleasant to us than to you; but how often the shepherds and vine-dressers fight over the spring, which belongs to us both, and whose beautiful wall and marble bench are already damaged, and will soon be completely destroyed, because your master says mine ought to bear the expense of the work—"

"And I daily strengthen him in this belief. We repaired the inclosing wall of the spring, and it's only fair to ask Protarch

to mend the masonry of the platform. We won't yield, and if you—"

"If we refuse to do Lysander's will, it will lead to the quarrelling I would fain prevent by Phaon's marriage with your Xanthe. Your master is in the habit of following your advice, as if you were his own mother. You nurse the poor invalid like one, and if you would only—"

"Lysander has other plans, and Phaon's father is seeking an heiress for his son in Messina."

"But surely not for the youth's happiness, nor do I come to speak to you in Protarch's name."

"So you invented the little plan yourself —I am afraid without success, for I've already told you that my master has other views."

"Then try to win him to our side—no, not only to us, but to do what is best for the prosperity of this house."

"Not for this house; only for yourselves. Your plan doesn't please me."

"Why not?"

"I don't wish what you desire."

"'I don't wish;' that's a woman's most convincing reason."

"It is, for at least I desire nothing I haven't carefully considered. And you know Alciphron, in Syracuse, our master's oldest brother, did not ask for the heiress, who probably seemed to him too insignificant for his own family, but wanted our girl for his son Leonax. We joyfully gave our consent, and, within a few days, perhaps to-morrow, the suitor will come from Messina with your master to see his bride."

"Still, I stick to it: your Xanthe belongs to our Phaon, and, if you would act according to Dionysius's wishes, like fair-minded people—"

"Isn't Alciphron—the best and wisest of men—also Dionysius's child? I would give his first-born, rather than any one else, this fruitful soil, and, when the rich father's favorite, when Leonax once rules here by Xanthe's side, there'll be no lack of means

to rebuild the platform and renew a few marble benches."

Angered by these words, the old man indignantly exclaimed:

"You add mockery to wrong. We know the truth. To please Alciphron, your foster-child, you would make us all beggars. If Lysander gives his daughter to Leonax it will be your work, yours alone, and we will—"

Semestre did not allow herself to be intimidated, but, angrily raising her myrtle-staff, interrupted Jason by exclaiming in a loud, tremulous voice:

"You are right. This old heart clings to Alciphron, and throbs more quickly at the mere mention of its darling's name; but verily you have done little to win our affection. Last autumn the harvest of new wine was more abundant than we expected. We lacked skins, and when we asked you to help us with yours—"

"We said no, because we ourselves did not know what to do with the harvest."

"And who shamefully killed my gray cat?"

"It entered Phaon's dove-cote and killed the young of his best pair of cropper pigeons."

"It was a marten, not the good, kind creature. You are unfriendly in all your acts, for when our brown hen flew over to you yesterday she was driven away with stones. Did Phaon mistake her for a vulture with sharp beak and powerful talons?"

"A maid-servant drove her away, because, since your master has been ill and no longer able to attend to business, your poultry daily feeds upon our barley."

"I'm surprised you don't brand us as robbers!" cried Semestre. "Yes, if you had beaten me yourself with a stick, you would say a dry branch of a fig or olive tree had accidentally fallen on my back. I know you well enough, and Leonax, Alciphron's son, not your sleepy Phaon, whom people say is roaming about when he ought to be resting

quietly in the house, shall have our girl for his wife. It's not I who say so, but Lysander, my lord and master."

"Your will is his," replied Jason. "Far be it from me to wound the sick man with words, but ever since he has been ill you've played the master, and he ought to be called the house-keeper. Ay, you have more influence under his roof than any one else, but Aphrodite and Eros are a thousand times more powerful, for you rule by pans, spits, and soft pillows—they govern hearts with divine, irresistible omnipotence."

Semestre laughed scornfully, and, striking the hard stone floor with her myrtle-staff, exclaimed:

"My spit is enough, and perhaps Eros is helping it with his arrows, for Xanthe no longer asks for your Phaon, any more than I fretted for a person now standing before me when he was young. Eros loves harder work. People who grow up together and meet every day, morning, noon, and night, get used to each other as the foot does to

the sandal, and the sandal to the foot, but the heart remains untouched. But when a handsome stranger, with perfumed locks and costly garments, suddenly meets the maiden, Aphrodite's little son fits an arrow to his golden bow."

"But he doesn't shoot," cried Jason, "when he knows that another shaft has already pierced the maiden's heart. Any man can win any girl, except one whose soul is filled with love for another."

"The gray-headed old bachelor speaks from experience," retorted Semestre, quickly. "And your Phaon! If he really loved our girl, how could he woo another or have her wooed for him? It comes to the same thing. But I don't like to waste so many words. I know our Xanthe better than you, and she no more cares for her playfellow than the column on the right side of the hearth yearns toward the one on the left, though they have stood together under the same roof so long."

"Do you know what the marble feels?"

"Nothing, Jason, nothing at all; that is, just as much as Xanthe feels for Phaon. But what's that noise outside the door?"

The house-keeper was still talking, when one of the folding doors opened a little, and Dorippe called through the crack:

"May we come in? Here's a messenger from Protarch."

"Admit him," cried Semestre, eagerly. The door flew wide open, and the two girls entered the women's apartment with Mopsus, the brother of the lively Chloris. The latter was clinging to his arm, and as he came into the hall removed the broad-brimmed travelling-hat from his brown locks, while dark-skinned Dorippe went behind him and pushed the hesitating youth across the threshold, as a boat is launched into the sea.

In reply to the house-keeper's excited questions, he related that Protarch had sold his master's oil at Messina for as high a price as his own, bought two new horses for his neighbor Cleon, and sent Mopsus him-

self forward with them. If the wind didn't change, he would arrive that day.

While speaking, he drew from the girdle which confined his blue chiton, bordered with white, around his waist, a strip of papyrus, and handed it to Semestre with a greeting from his master.

The house-keeper looked at both sides of the yellow sheet, turned it over and over, held it close to her eyes, and then glanced hesitatingly at Jason. He would know that she could not read; but Xanthe could decipher written sentences, and the young girl must soon appear at breakfast.

"Shall I read it?" asked the old man.

"I could do so myself, if I chose," replied the house-keeper, drawing her staff over the floor in sharp and blunt angles, as if she were writing. "I could, but I don't like to hear news on an empty stomach, and what is said in this letter concerns myself, I should suppose, and nobody else. Go and call Xanthe to breakfast, Dorippe."

"I know what is in it," cried the girl,

reluctant to part from her companion's brother, whom she loved, and who still had a great deal to tell her about his journey to Messina. "Mopsus has told us. Our master's nephew, Leonax, Alciphron's son, will accompany his uncle and stay for a week or longer as a guest, not over yonder with Protarch, but here in *our* house. He is a handsome youth, even taller than Phaon, and Mopsus says Alciphron's wife, by our master's request, dipped deep into his purse at Messina, and bought from her husband's merchant friends gold bracelets and women's garments, such as matrons wear."

At these words a smile of joy and hope flitted over Semestre's wrinkled face, like a spring breeze sweeping across a leafless garden. She no longer thought of the harm a piece of news might do her empty stomach, and, while mentally seeing the flutter of a matron's beautiful blue garment and the flash of Xanthe's rich dowry, eagerly asked the welcome messenger:

"Does she speak the truth? And what is this about the robes?"

"I brought the clothes myself," replied Mopsus, "and packed them in a beautiful chest inlaid with ivory, like those newly-wedded youths receive with the bridal dowry. Praxilla, the handsome sister of Alciphron's wife, also gave—"

"Go and call Xanthe!" cried Semestre, interrupting the messenger. She had laughed softly several times while listening to his tale, and, when the girls hastily withdrew with Mopsus, cast a triumphant glance at Jason.

Then, remembering how much was to be done to make fitting preparation for the young suitor Leonax, she called loudly:

"Dorippe—Chloris! Chloris—Dorippe!"

Neither of the maidens seemed to hear, and, when obliged to resign all hope of an answer, she shrugged her shoulders, and turning to Jason said:

"So young and so deaf; it is sad. Poor girls!"

"They like Mopsus better than you, and don't *wish* to hear," replied Jason, laughing.

"They *can't*," said Semestre, angrily. "Mopsus is a bold, good-for-nothing fellow, whom I've often wanted to drive out of the house, but I should like to see the person who refused me obedience. As for your proposal, you have now heard distinctly enough that our girl is intended for Leonax."

"But suppose Xanthe doesn't want Leonax, and prefers Phaon to the stranger?"

"Alciphron's son a 'stranger' on the estates of his ancestors!" exclaimed Semestre. "What don't we hear? But I must go to work to prepare the best possible reception for Leonax, that he may feel from the first he is no stranger here, but perfectly at home. Now go, if you choose, and offer sacrifices to Aphrodite, that she may join the hearts of Xanthe and Phaon. I'll stick to my spit."

"Then you'll be in the right place," cried Jason, "but you're not yet turning it for Leonax's wedding-feast."

"And I promise you I'll prepare the roast for Phaon's," retorted Semestre, "but not until the sacrifice of an animal I'm fattening myself induces the foam-born goddess to kindle in Xanthe's heart sweet love for Leonax."

CHAPTER II.

XANTHE.

"XANTHE, Xanthe!" called Semestre, a short time after. "Xanthe! Where is the girl?"

The old woman had gone into the garden. Knowing how to use time to advantage, and liking to do two things at once, while looking for her nursling and repeatedly shouting the girl's name, she was gathering vegetables and herbs, on which the dew of early morning still glittered brightly.

While thus occupied, she was thinking far more of her favorite's son and the roast

meats, cakes, and sauces to be prepared for him, than of Xanthe.

She wanted to provide for Leonax all the dishes his father had specially liked when a child, for what a father relishes, she considered, will please his children.

Twenty times she had stooped to pluck fresh lavender, green lettuce, and young, red turnips, and each time, while straightening herself again by her myrtle-staff, as well as a back bent by age would allow, called "Xanthe, Xanthe!"

Though she at last threw her head back so far that the sun shone into her open mouth, and the power of her lungs was not small, no answer came. This did not make her uneasy, for the girl could not be far away, and Semestre was used to calling her name more than once before she obeyed.

True, to-day the answer was delayed longer than usual. The maiden heard the old woman's shrill, resounding voice very clearly, but heeded it no more than the cackling of the hens, the screams of the

peacocks, and the cooing of the doves in the court-yard.

The house-keeper, she knew, was calling her to breakfast, and the bit of dry bread she had taken with her was amply sufficient to satisfy her hunger. Nay, if Semestre had tempted her with the sweetest cakes, she would not have left her favorite nook by the spring now.

This spring gushed from the highest rock on her father's estate. She often went there, especially when her heart was stirred, and it was a lovely spot.

The sparkling water rushed from a cleft in the rocks, and, on the left of the little bench, where Xanthe sat, formed a clear, transparent pool, whose edges were inclosed by exquisitely-polished, white-marble blocks. Every reddish pebble, every smooth bit of snowy quartz, every point and furrow and stripe on the pretty shells on its sandy bottom, was as distinctly visible as if held before the eyes on the palm of the hand, and yet the water was so deep that the gold cir-

clet sparkling above the elbow on Xanthe's round arm, nay, even the gems confining her peplum on the shoulder, would have been wet had she tried to touch the bottom of the basin with the tips of her fingers.

The water was green and clear as crystal, into which, while molten, bits of emeralds had been cast to change them into liquid drops.

Farther on it flowed through a channel choked with all kinds of plants. Close by the edges of the rivulet, which rushed swiftly down to the valley, drooped delicate vines, that threw their tendrils over the stones and flourished luxuriantly in the rocks amid thick, moist clumps of moss. Dainty green plants, swayed to and fro by the plashing water, grew everywhere on the bottom of the brook, and, wherever on its course it could flow more smoothly, ferns, nodding gracefully, surrounded it like ostrich-feathers waving about the cradle of a royal babe.

Xanthe liked to watch the stream disappear in the myrtle-grove.

When, sitting in her favorite nook, she turned her eyes downward, she overlooked the broad gardens and fields of her father and uncle, stretching on the right and left of the stream along the gentle slope of the mountain, and the narrow plain by the sea.

The whole scene resembled a thick woolen carpet, whose green surface was embroidered with white and yellow spots, or one of the baskets young maidens bear on their heads at the feast of Demeter, and in which, piled high above the edge, light and dark-hued fruit gleams forth from leaves of every tint.

Groves of young pomegranate and myrtle-trees, with vigorous shoots, stood forth in strong relief against the silvery gray-green foliage of the gnarled olive-trees.

Fragrant roses, glowing with a scarlet hue, as if the sun's fiery kiss had called them to life, adorned bushes and hedges, while, blushing faintly, as if a child's lips had waked them from slumber, the blossoms of

the peach and almond glimmered on the branches of the trees.

Tiny young green leaves were growing from the oddly-interwoven branches of the fig-trees, to which clung the swelling pouches of the fruit. Golden lemons glittered amid their strong, brilliant foliage, which had survived the winter season; and long rows of blackish-green cypresses rose straight and tall, like the grave voices of the chorus amid the joyous revel. To Xanthe, gazing downward, her father's pine-wood seemed like a camp full of arched, round tents, and, if she allowed her eyes to wander farther, she beheld the motionless sea, whose broad surface, on this pleasant morning, sparkled like polished sapphire, and everywhere seemed striving to surpass with its own blue the color of the clear sky. Ever and anon, like a tiny silver cloud floating across the firmament, white sails glided by.

Pleasant green hills framed this lovely view. On their well-cultivated slopes appeared here the white, glimmering walls of

a temple; yonder villages, houses, and cottages, like the herds and single sheep that lie half concealed by dense foliage.

Garlands of flowers surround the heads of happy mortals, and here the house of every wealthy land-owner was inclosed by a hedge or garden.

Behind the hills rose the sharply-cut outlines of the naked cliffs of the lofty, distant mountains, and the snowy head of sleeping Mount Etna gleamed brightly through the mist.

Now, in the early morning, sea and garden, hills and distant mountains were covered with a delicate veil of indescribable hue. It seemed as if the sea had furnished the warp of this fabric, and the golden sun the woof.

The scene was wondrously beautiful, but Xanthe had not gone to the spring to gaze at the landscape; nay, she scarcely knew that it was lovely.

When the sea shone with the hue of the sky and lay motionless, as it did to-day, she thought Glaucus, the god of the blue

sea, was sunning himself in pleasant slumber.

On other bright days when the waves and surges swelled, white foam crowned their crests, and a never-ending succession of breakers dashed upon the shore, she believed the fifty daughters of Nereus were pursuing their sports under the clear water.

They were all lovely women, and full of exuberant gayety.

Some rocked quietly on the gleaming waves, others boldly swung themselves on the backs of the bearded Tritons, and merrily urged them through the flood.

When the surf beat roaring on the strand, Xanthe thought she could hear these creatures guiding their course with their scaly tails and blowing into shells, and many a glimmering foam-crest on a deep-blue wave was no transparent bubble—no, the girl distinctly saw that it was the white neck, the gleaming arm, or the snowy foot of one of Nereus's daughters. She believed that she clearly distinguished them sporting joyously

up and down through the azure water, now plunging into the depths with their feet, and now with their heads foremost, anon floating gently on the surface of the waves. One held out her hand to another, and in so doing their beautiful, rounded arms often gleamed beneath the crest of a surge.

Every day they practised new games, as the sea never looks precisely the same; each hour it changed its hue, here, there, and everywhere, Light streaks, like transparent bluish-green gauze, often ran through the darker surface, which resembled a purplish-blue mantle of some costly Phœnician stuff; the waves could flash black as the eye of night, and white as Leucothea's neck.

Then Amphitrite appeared, with floating hair and resonant voice, and beside her Poseidon with his four steeds.

Frowning sullenly, he struck them sharply with his lash, which whistled through the air, and angrily thrust his trident deep into the sea. Instantly the waves took hues of

lighter brown, deeper yellow, and cloudy gray, and the sea wore the aspect of a shallow pond with muddy bottom, into which workmen hurl blocks of stone. The purity of the water was sadly dimmed, and the billows dashed foaming toward the sky, threatening in their violent assault to shatter the marble dike erected along the shore. The Nereids, trembling, took refuge in the ever-calm depths, the Tritons no longer used their hollow shells to blow gentle harmonies; nay, they sent forth crashing war-songs, as if some hostile citadel were to be assailed; while Amphitrite thrust both hands into her long, fluttering hair, and with out-stretched head uttered her furious roar.

But to-day the sea was calm, and when Xanthe had reached the spring the edges of the milk-white, light, fleecy clouds, towering one above another on the summits of the loftier mountains, were still glowing with a rosy light. It was the edge of the garment of the vanishing Eos, the leaves of the blossoms scattered by the Hours in the pathway

of the four steeds of Helios, as they rose from the waves.

To day and at this hour the morning sunlight fell serenely on the tall cypresses upon the hill, the trees in the garden swayed in the soft breath of the morning breeze, and Xanthe nodded to them, for she thought the beautiful Dryads living in the trees were greeting each other.

Often, with a brief prayer, she laid flowers or a round cake on the altar that stood beside her seat, and which her ancestor had erected to the nymph of the spring—but today she had not come for this.

Then what brought her to the hill so early? Did she visit the spring to admire her own image in its mirror-like surface?

At home she was rarely permitted such an indulgence, for, whenever she looked in the polished metal-disk, Semestre used to say:

"If a girl often peers into such useless things, she'll certainly see a fool's image in them."

Forbidden things are charming, yet Xanthe rarely looked into this liquid mirror, though she might have enjoyed gazing at it frequently, for her figure was tall and slender as the trunk of a cypress, her thick fair hair glittered like gold, the oval of her face was exquisitely rounded, long lashes shaded the large blue eyes that could conceal no emotion which stirred her soul, and when she was alone seemed to ask: "What have the gods allotted for my future?" Yet in their gaze might often be read the answer: "Something delightful, surely."

And yet Xanthe did not come to the spring to paint pictures of her future; on the contrary, she came to be sad, and shed tears unrebuked. She did not weep passionately, but the big salt drops welled slowly from her eyes and ran down her young cheeks, as drop after drop of shining sap flows down the trunk of a wounded birch-tree.

Yes, Xanthe felt very sorrowful, yet everything that surrounded her was so

bright, and at her home laughter was rarely silent, while her own often rang out no less merrily than that of lively Chloris and dark-skinned Dorippe.

Her sick father, now slowly recovering, could refuse her nothing, and, if Semestre tried to do so, Xanthe usually succeeded in having her own way. There was no lack of festivals and joyous dances, and to none of her companions did the youths present more beautiful ribbons, to no one in the circle did they prefer to offer their hands. She was the fairest of all the maidens far and near, and Ismene, Phryxus's wife, had said that her laughter was gay enough to make a cripple dance. Ismene had a daughter herself just Xanthe's age, so it must probably have been true.

Then why, in the name of all the gods, was Xanthe sad?

Is any cause required to explain it?

Must a maiden have met with misfortune, to make her feel a longing to weep?

Certainly not.

Nay, the gayest rattle-brain is the least likely to escape such a desire.

When the sky has long shone with unclouded splendor, and the air is so wonderfully clear that even the most distant mountain-peaks are distinctly visible, rain is not long delayed; and who can laugh heartily a long time without finally shedding tears like a mourner?

Whoever endures a severe though not the deepest affliction, whoever is permitted to reach the topmost summit of joy, and a girl who feels love—these three Heaven favors with the blessing of tears.

Had Eros's arrow struck Xanthe's young heart too?

It was possible, though she would not confess it even to herself, and only yesterday had denied it, without the quiver of an eyelash.

Yet, if she did love a youth, and for his sake had climbed to the spring, he must doubtless dwell in the reddish house, standing on a beautiful level patch of ground on

the right of the brook, between the sea and the pool; for she glanced toward it again and again, and, except the servants, no one lived under its roof save the aged steward Jason, and Phaon, her uncle's son. Protarch himself had gone to Messina, with his own and her father's oil.

To age is allotted the alms of reverence, to youth the gift of love, and, of the three men who lived in the house on Xanthe's right-hand, only one could lay claim to such a gift, and he had an unusually good right to do so.

Xanthe was thinking of Phaon as she sat beside the spring, but her brow wore such a defiant frown that she did not bear the most distant resemblance to a maiden giving herself up to tender emotions.

Now the door of the reddish house opened, and, rising hastily, she looked toward it. A slave came cautiously out, bearing a large jar with handles, made of brown clay, adorned with black figures.

What had the high-shouldered graybeard

done, that she stamped her foot so angrily on the ground, and buried the upper row of her snow-white teeth deep in her under-lip, as if stifling some pang?

No one is less welcome than the unbidden intruder, who meets us in the place of some one for whom we ardently long, and Xanthe did not wish to see the slave, but Phaon, his master's son.

She had nothing to say to the youth; she would have rushed away if he had ventured to seek her by the spring, but she wanted to see him, wanted to learn whether Semestre had told the truth, when she said Phaon intended to marry a wealthy heiress, whose hand his father was seeking in Messina. The house-keeper had declared the night before that he only wooed the ugly creature for the sake of her money, and now took advantage of his father's absence to steal out of the house evening after evening, as soon as the fire was lighted on the hearth. And the fine night-bird did not return till long past sunrise, no doubt from mad revels with

that crazy Hermias and other wild fellows from Syracuse. They probably understood how to loosen his slow tongue.

Then the old woman described what occurred at such banquets, and when she mentioned the painted flute-players, with whom the dissipated city youths squandered their fathers' money, and the old house-keeper called attention to the fact that Phaon already wandered about as stupidly and sleepily as if he were a docile pupil of the notorious Hermias, Xanthe fairly hated her, and almost forgot the respect she owed to her gray hair, and told her to her face she was a liar and slanderer.

But the girl had been unable to speak, for Phaon's secret courtship of the Messina heiress had deeply wounded her pride, and he really did look more weary and dreamy than usual.

Semestre's praises of her cousin, the young Leonax, Xanthe had heard as little as the chirping of the crickets on the hearth, and before the house-keeper had finished

speaking she rose, and, without bidding her good-night, turned her back and left the women's apartment.

Ere lying down to rest in her own room, she paced up and down before her couch, then began to loosen her thick hair so carelessly that the violent pulling actually hurt her, and tied so tightly under her chin the pretty scarlet kerchief worn over her golden tresses at night to prevent them from tangling, that she was obliged to unfasten it again to keep from stifling.

The sandals, from which she had released her slender feet, and which, obedient to her dead mother's teaching, she usually placed beside the chair where her clothes lay smoothly folded, she flung into a corner of the room, still thinking of Phaon, the Messina heiress, and her playfellow's shameful conduct. She had intended to discover whether Semestre spoke the truth, and in the stillness of the night consider what she must do to ascertain how much Phaon was concerned in his father's suit.

But the god Morpheus willed otherwise, for scarcely had Xanthe laid down to rest, extinguished her little lamp, and wrapped herself closely in the woolen coverlet, when sleep overpowered her.

The young girl waked just before sunrise, instantly thought of Phaon, of the heiress, and of Semestre's wicked words, and hastily went out to the spring.

From there she could see whether her uncle's son returned home from the city with staggering steps, or would, as usual, come out of the house early in the morning to curry and water his brown steeds, which no slave was ever permitted to touch.

But he did not appear, and, in his place, the high-shouldered servant entered the court-yard.

If the young girl was usually sad here, because she liked to be melancholy, to-day grief pierced her heart like a knife, and the bit of white bread she raised to her lips because, with all her sorrow, she was hungry, tasted bitter, as if dipped in wormwood.

She had no need to salt it; the tears that fell on it did that.

Xanthe heard the house-keeper's calls, but did not obey immediately, and perhaps would not have heeded them at all if she had not noticed—yes, she was not mistaken—that, in the full meaning of the words, she had begun to weep like a chidden child.

She was weeping for anger; and soon it vexed her so much to think that she should cry, that fresh tears streamed down her cheeks.

But not many, for, ere her beautiful eyes grew red, they were dry again, as is the custom of eyes when they are young and see anything new.

Two children, a vineyard-watchman's son and a herdsman's little daughter, approached the spring, talking loudly together.

They had decked themselves with fresh, green vines twined about their necks and bosoms, and were now going to sail a little boat made of bark in the tiny, walled pool into which the spring flowed.

The boy had been the owner of the boat, but had given it to the little girl the day before, and now refused to deliver it, unless she would give him in exchange the shining shells her big brother had found, cleaned, and fastened around her little brown arm with a string. The boy persisted in his demand, stretching out his hand for the shells, while the little girl, with sobs and tears, defended herself.

Xanthe, unobserved by the children, became a witness of this contest between might and right, hastily stepped between the combatants, gave the boy a blow on the shoulder, took the boat away, handed it to the little maiden, and, turning to the latter, said:

"Now, play quietly together, and, if Syrus doesn't let you keep the boat and the shells, come to me, poor Stephanion."

So saying, she wiped the little girl's eyes with her own skirt, seized her by the shoulder, grasped the boy's black curls, pressed the two little ones toward each other with gentle violence, and commanded:

"Now, kiss each other!"

The little girl dutifully obeyed the bidding, but the kiss the boy gave his playmate strongly resembled a blow with the mouth.

Xanthe laughed merrily, turned her back on the children, and went slowly down into the valley.

During her walk all sorts of little incidents flashed through her mind with the speed of lightning; memories of the days when she herself was a little girl and Phaon had played with her daily, as the curly-headed Syrus now did with the herdsman's daughter.

But all the scenes swiftly conjured up before her mental vision were very different from that just witnessed.

Once, when she had said that the brook couldn't bear to the sea all the leaves and flowers she tossed in, Phaon only smiled quietly, but the next day she found, fastened to an axis, a wooden cross he had carved himself and fixed between some stones The stream swept against the broad surfaces of the spokes and forced it to turn constantly.

For weeks both enjoyed the successful toy, but he did not ask a word of thanks, nor did she utter any, only eagerly showed her pleasure, and that was enough for Phaon.

If she began to build a house of sand and stones with him, and it was not finished at once, when they went to play next day she found it roofed and supplied with a little garden, where twigs were stuck in the sand for trees, and red and blue buds for flowers. He had made the seat by the spring for her, and also the little steps on the seashore, by whose aid it was possible to enter dry-shod the boat her playfellow had painted with brilliant hues of red and blue, because a neighbor's gay skiff had pleased her fancy.

She now thought of these and many similar acts, and that he had never promised her anything, only placed the finished article before her as a matter of course.

It had never entered his mind to ask compensation for his gifts or thanks for his acts, like curly-headed Syrus. Silently he rendered her service after service; but, unfor-

tunately, at this hour Xanthe was not disposed to acknowledge it.

People grow angry with no one more readily than the person from whom they have received many favors which they are unable to repay; women, no matter whether young or old, resemble goddesses in the fact that they cheerfully accept every gift from a man as an offering that is their due, so long as they are graciously disposed toward the giver, but to-day Xanthe was inclined to be vexed with her playmate.

A thousand joys and sorrows, shared in common, bound them to each other, and in the farthest horizons of her recollections lay an event which had given her affection for him a new direction. His mother and hers had died on the same day, and since then Xanthe had thought it her duty to watch over and care for him, at first, probably, only as a big live doll, afterward in a more serious way. And now he was deceiving her and going to ruin. Yet Phaon was so entirely different from the wild fellows in Syracuse.

A Question.

From a child he had been one of those who act without many words. He liked to wander dreamily in lonely paths, with his large, dark eyes fixed on the ground.

He rarely spoke, unless questioned.

Never did he boast of being able to accomplish, or having successfully performed, this or that feat.

He was silent at his work, and, even while engaged in merry games, set about a task slowly, but completed whatever he undertook.

He was welcome in the wrestling-ring and at the dance, for the youths respected his strength, grace, dexterity, and the quiet way in which he silenced wranglers and boasters; while the maidens liked to gaze into the handsome dreamer's eyes, and admired him, though even in the maddest whirl of the dance he remained passionless, moving lightly in perfect time to the measures of the tambourine and double flute.

True, many whom he forgot to notice railed at his silent ways, and even Xanthe

had often been sorely vexed when his tongue failed to utter a single word of the significant stories told by his eyes. Ay, they understood how to talk! When his deep, ardent gaze rested upon her, unwavering, but glowing and powerful as the lava-stream that sweeps every obstacle from its still, noiseless course, she believed he was not silent from poverty of mind and heart, but because the feelings that moved him were so mighty that no mortal lips could clothe them in words.

Nevertheless, to-day Xanthe was angry with her playfellow, and a maiden's wrath has two eyes—one blind, the other keener than a falcon's.

What she usually prized and valued in Phaon she now did not see at all, but distinguished every one of his defects.

True, he had shown her much affection without words, but he was certainly as mute as a fish, and would, doubtless, have boasted and asked for thanks like anybody else, if indolence had not fettered his stiff tongue.

Only a short time ago she was obliged to give her hand to lanky Iphis, because Phaon came forward too slowly. He was sleepy, a foolish dreamer, and she would tell him it would be better for him to stretch himself comfortably on his couch and continue to practise silence, rather than woo foreign maidens and riot all night with dissipated companions.

CHAPTER III.

LYSANDER.

As Xanthe approached her father's house, Semestre's call and the gay notes of a *monaulus** greeted her.

A conjurer had obtained admittance, and was showing his laughing audience the tricks of his trained cocks and hens.

He was a dwarfish, bow-legged little man, with a short neck, on which rested a big head with a very prominent forehead, that

* A musical instrument, played like our flageolet or clarinet.

shaded his small piercing eyes like a balcony.

The feathered actors lived in a two-wheeled cart, drawn from village to village, and city to city, by a tiny, gayly-decked donkey.

Three cocks and four hens were now standing on the roof of the cart, looking very comical, for their clever owner, who doubtless knew what pleases the eyes of children and peasants, had colored their white feathers, here and there, with brilliant red and glaring yellow.

Beside the cart stood a pale, sorrowful-looking boy, playing a merry tune on the monaulus. Lysander, Xanthe's father, had been helped out of the house into the sunlight, and, seated in his arm-chair of polished olive-wood, was gazing at the show.

As soon as he saw his daughter, he beckoned to her, and stroking her hair, while she pressed her lips to his forehead, said:

"An amusing sight! The two hens obey the little man as if they were dutiful children.

I'm glad he came, for a person like me, forbidden by fate to enjoy the comical things to be seen out of doors, must be grateful when they come in his way. Your feet are twitching, Dorippe. Whenever a flute raises its voice, it moves young girls' limbs, as the wind stirs the leaves of the poplars. You would doubtless like to begin to dance at once."

At these words, Mopsus, keeping time to the music, advanced toward his sweetheart, but Semestre stepped before him, exclaiming half to the lad and half to her master:

"There must be no jumping about now. Whoever dances in the morning will break a leg at night."

Lysander nodded assent.

"Then go into the house, Chloris, and fetch this king of hens a jug of wine, some bread, and two cheeses."

"How many cheeses?" asked the housekeeper."

"Two," replied Lysander.

"One will be more than enough," cried Semestre.—"Bring only one, Chloris."

The invalid smilingly shrugged his shoulders, clasped Xanthe's hand as she stood beside him, and said in so low a tone that the old woman could not hear:

"Haven't I grown like little thick-skull's hens? Semestre commands and I must obey. There she goes after Chloris, to save the second cheese."

Xanthe smiled assent. Her father raised his voice and called to the juggler:

"Well, my little friend, show what your actors can do.—You young people, Mopsus and Dorippe, for aught I care, can dance as long as the monaulus sounds, and Semestre stays in the house."

"We want first to see what the hens can do," cried the dark-haired girl, clinging to her lover's arm, and turning with Mopsus toward the exhibition, which now began again.

There was many an exclamation of astonishment, many a laugh, for, when the little

man ordered his largest cock to show its skill in riding, it jumped nimbly on the donkey's back; when he ordered it to clean its horse, it pulled a red feather out of the ornaments on the ass's head; and finally proved itself a trumpeter, by stretching its neck and beginning to crow.

The hens performed still more difficult feats, for they drew from a wooden box for each spectator a leaf of a tree, on which certain characters were visible.

The scrawl was intelligible only to the conjurer, but was said to contain infallible information about the future, and the little man offered to interpret the writing to each individual.

This trainer of hens was a clever dwarf, with very quick ears. He had distinctly understood that, through Semestre, he was to lose a nice cheese, and, when the housekeeper returned, ordered a hen to tell each person present how many years he or she had lived in the world.

The snow-white bird, with the yellow

head, scratched seventeen times before Xanthe, and, on reaching Mopsus, twenty-three times, which was perfectly correct.

"Now tell us this honorable lady's age too," said the conjurer to the hen.

Semestre told Chloris to repeat what the little man had said, and was already reflecting whether she should not let him have the second cheese, in consideration of the "honorable lady," when the hen began to scratch again.

Up to sixty she nodded assent, as she watched the bird's claw; at sixty-five she compressed her lips tightly, at seventy the lines on her brow announced a coming storm, at eighty she struck the ground violently with her myrtle-staff, and, as the hen, scratching faster and faster, approached ninety, and a hundred, and she saw that all the spectators were laughing, and her master was fairly holding his sides, rushed angrily into the house.

As soon as she had vanished behind the doors, Lysander threw the man half

a drachm, and, clapping his hands, exclaimed:

"Now, children, kick up your heels; we sha'n't see Semestre again immediately. You did your business well, friend: but now come here and interpret your hen's oracles."

The conjurer bowed, by bending his big head and quickly raising it again, for his short back seemed to be immovable, approached the master of the house, and with his little round fingers grasped at the leaf in Lysander's hand; but the latter hastily drew it back, saying:

"First this girl, then I, for her future is long, while mine—"

"Yours," interrupted the dwarf, standing before Lysander—"yours will be a pleasant one, for the hen has drawn for you a leaf that means peaceful happiness."

"A violet-leaf!" exclaimed Xanthe.

"Yes, a violet-leaf," repeated the conjurer. "Put it in my hand. There are—just look here—there are seven lines, and seven—everybody knows that—seven is the

number of health. Peaceful happiness in good health, that is what your oracle says."

"The gods owe me that, after suffering so long," sighed Lysander. "At any rate, come back here in a year, and if your cackling Pythia and this little leaf tell the truth, and I am permitted to bring it to you without support or crutch, I'll give you a stout piece of cloth for a new cloak; yet nay, better try your luck in six months, for your chiton looks sicker than I, and will hardly last a whole year."

"Not half a one," replied the conjurer, with a sly smile. "Give me the piece of stuff to-day, that, when I come back in a month, I may have suitable garments when I amuse the guests at the feast given for your recovery. I'm no giant, and shall not greatly impair your store."

"We'll see what can be done," replied Lysander, laughing, "and if, when you return in a month, I don't turn you from the door as a bad prophet, in spite of your fine clothes, your flute-player shall have a piece

of linen for his thin limbs. But now foretell my daughter's future, too."

The dwarf took Xanthe's leaf from her hand, and said:

"This comes from an olive-tree, is particularly long, and has a light and dark side. You will live to a great age, and your life will be more or less happy as you shape it."

"As you shape it," repeated the girl. "That's a real hen's oracle. 'As people do, so things will be,' my nurse used to say every third word." Disappointed and angry, she threw the leaf on the ground, and turned her back on the little man.

The conjurer watched her keenly and searchingly, as not without difficulty he picked up the leaf. Then glancing pleasantly at her father, he called her back, pointed with his finger to the inner surface, and said:

"Just look at these lines, with the little strokes here at the end. That's a snail with horns. A slow creature! It warns people not to be over-hasty. If you feel inclined

to run, check your steps and ask where the path will lead."

"And move through life like a cart creaking down into the valley with drags on the wheels," interrupted Xanthe. "I expected something unlike school-masters' lessons from the clever hen that loaded Semestre with so many years."

"Only question her about what is in your heart," replied the little man, "and she won't fail to answer."

The young girl glanced irresolutely at the conjurer, but repressed the desire to learn more of the future, fearing her father's laughter. She knew that, when Lysander was well and free from pain, nothing pleased him so much as to tease her till she wept.

The invalid guessed what was passing in his little daughter's mind, and said, encouragingly:

"Ask the hen. I'll stop both ears while you question the oracle. Yes, yes, one can scarcely hear his own voice for the monaulus and the shouts of the crazy people yonder.

Such sounds lure those who are fond of dancing, as surely as a honey-comb brings flies. By the dog! there are four merry couples already! Only I miss Phaon. You say the couch in my brother's house has grown too hard for him, and he has found softer pillows in Syracuse. With us the day began long ago, but in the city perhaps they haven't quite finished with yesterday. I'm sorry for the fine fellow."

"Is it true," asked Xanthe, blushing, "that my uncle is seeking a rich bride for him in Messina?"

"Probably, but in courtship one does not always reach the desired goal. Has Phaon told you nothing about his father's wishes? Question the conjurer, or he'll get his new clothes with far too little trouble. Save me the reproach of being a spendthrift."

"I don't wish to do so; what is the use of such folly?" replied Xanthe, with flushed cheeks, preparing to go into the house.

Her father shrugged his shoulders, and, turning his head, called after her:

"Do as you please, but cut a piece from the brown woolen cloth, and bring it to the conjurer."

The young girl disappeared in the house. The tune which the boy drew from the monaulus again and again sounded monotonous, but the young people constantly grew more mirthful; higher and higher sprang the bounding feet.

The ribbons fluttered as if a storm had seized them; many a gay garment waved; and there was no end to the shouts and clapping of hands in time with the music.

When Mopsus, or any other lad, raised his voice unusually loud, or a young girl laughed in the overflowing joy of her heart, Lysander's eyes sparkled like sunshine, and he often raised his hands and swayed merrily to and fro to the measure of the music.

"Your heart really dances with the young people," said the conjurer.

"But it lacks feet," replied Lysander, and then he told him about his fall, and the particulars of his sufferings, the danger in which

he had been, the remedies used, and the final convalescence. He did this with great pleasure, for it always relieved his mind when he was permitted to tell the story of his life to a sympathizing auditor, and few had listened more attentively than did the conjurer, partly from real interest, partly in anticipation of the cloth.

The little man frequently interrupted Lysander with intelligent questions, and did not lose patience when the speaker paused to wave his hand to the merry group.

"How they laugh and enjoy themselves!" the invalid again exclaimed. "They are all young, and before I had this fall—"

The sentence was not finished, for the notes of the monaulus suddenly ceased, the dancers stopped, and, instead of the music and laughter, Semestre's voice was heard; but at the same time Xanthe, carrying a small piece of brown cloth over her arm, approached the sick man. The latter at first looked at his daughter's flushed face with some surprise, then again glanced

toward the scene of the interrupted dance, for something was happening there which he could not fully approve, though it forced him to laugh aloud.

The young people, whose sport had been interrupted, had recovered from their fright and joined in a long chain.

Mopsus led the saucy band.

A maiden followed each youth, and the whole party were united, for each individual grasped the person in front with both hands.

Singing a rhythmical dancing-tune, with the upper portion of the body bent forward, and executing dainty steps with their feet, they circled faster and faster around the furious house-keeper.

The latter strove to catch first Chloris, then Dorippe, then some other maiden, but ere she succeeded the chain separated, joining again behind her ere she could turn. Mopsus and his dark-haired sweetheart were again the leaders. When the ring broke the youths and maidens quickly grasped each other again, and the chain of singing,

laughing lads and lasses once more whirled around the old woman.

For some time the amused master of the house could not succeed in shaking his head disapprovingly; but when the old housekeeper, who had never ceased scolding and shaking her myrtle-staff, began to totter from anger and excitement, Lysander thought the jest was being carried too far, and, turning to his daughter, exclaimed:

"Go, rescue Semestre and drive those crazy people away. Fun must not go beyond proper bounds."

Xanthe instantly obeyed the command: the chain parted, the youths hurrying one way, the maidens another; the lads escaped, and so did all the girls except dark-haired Dorippe, who was caught by Semestre and driven into the house with angry words and blows.

"There will be tears after the morning dance," said Lysander, "and I advise you, friend, if you want to avoid a scolding yourself, to leave the place at once with your

feathered artists. Give the man the cloth, Xanthe."

Xanthe handed the brown woolen stuff to the conjurer.

She blushed faintly as she did so, for, while attempting to cut from the piece a sufficient quantity, Semestre had snatched the knife from her hand, exclaiming rudely:

"Half that is twice too much for the insolent rascal."

The little man took the scanty gift, spread it out to its full extent, and, turning to Lysander, said:

"At our age people rarely experience new emotions, but to-day, for the first time since I stopped growing, I wish I was still smaller than I am now."

The invalid had shaken his head discontentedly at sight of the tiny piece, and, as the conjurer was refolding it over his knee, loosed from his shoulders the chlamys he himself wore, saying gravely:

"Take this cloak, for what Lysander promises he does not perform by halves."

The last words were addressed to Semestre as well as the dwarf, for the old house-keeper, with panting breath and trembling hands, now approached her master.

Kind words were not to be expected from her mouth now, but even more bitter and vehement reproaches sprang to her lips as she saw her master give his scarcely-worn chlamys to a strolling vagrant, and also presume to reward her economy with taunts.

She had carefully woven the cloak with her own hands, and that, she cried, was the way her labor was valued! There was plenty of cloth in the chests, which Lysander could divide among the buffoons at the next fair in Syracuse. In other countries, even among wild barbarians, white hairs were honored, but here the elders taught the young people to insult them with jeers and mockery.

At these words the invalid's face turned pale, a dark shadow appeared under his

eyes, and an expression of pain hovered around his mouth. He looked utterly exhausted.

Every feature betrayed how the old woman's shrill voice and passionate words disturbed him, but he could not silence her by loud rebukes, for his voice failed, and he therefore sought to make peace by the soothing gestures of his thin hands and his beseeching eyes.

Xanthe felt and saw that her father was suffering, and exclaimed in a fearless, resolute tone:

"Silence, Semestre! your scolding is hurting my father."

These words increased the house-keeper's wrath instead of lessening it. In a half-furious, half-whining tone, she exclaimed:

"So it comes to this! The child orders the old woman. But you shall know, Lysander, that I won't allow myself to be mocked like a fool. That impudent Mopsus is your freed-woman's child, and served this house for high wages, but he shall leave it

this very day, so surely as I hope to live until the vintage. He or I! If you wish to keep him, I'll go to Agrigentum and live with my daughter and grandchildren, who send to me by every messenger. If this insolent fellow is more to you than I am, I'll leave this place of ingratitude. In Agrigentum—"

"It is beautiful in Agrigentum!" interrupted the conjurer, pointing with his finger impressively in the direction of this famous city.

"It is delightful there," cried the old woman, "so long as one doesn't meet pygmies like you in the streets."

The house-keeper was struggling for breath, and her master took advantage of the pause to murmur beseechingly, like a child who is to be deprived of something it loves:

"Mopsus must go—merry Mopsus? Nobody knows how to lift and support me so well."

These words softened Semestre's wrath, and, lowering her voice, she replied:

"You will no longer need the lad for that purpose; Leonax, Alciphron's son, is coming to-day. He'll lift and support you as if you were his own father. The people in Messina are friendly and honor age, for, while you jeer at me, they remember the old woman, and will send me a beautiful matron's-robe for the future wedding."

The invalid looked inquiringly at his daughter, and the latter answered, blushing:

"Semestre has told me. She informed me, while I was cutting the cloth, that Leonax would come as a suitor."

"May he fare better than Alkamenes and the others, whom you sent home! You know I will not force your inclinations, but, if I am to lose Mopsus, I should like a pleasant son. Why has Phaon fallen into such foolish, evil ways? The young Leonax—"

"Is of a different stamp," interrupted Semestre.—"Now come, my dove, I have a thousand things to do."

"Go," replied Xanthe. "I'll come di-

rectly.—You will feel better, father, if you rest now. Let me help you into the house, and lie down on the cushion for a time."

The young girl tried to lift her father, but her strength was too feeble to raise the wearied man. At last, with the conjurer's help, he succeeded in rising, and the latter whispered earnestly in his ear:

"My hens tell me many things, but another oracle behind my forehead says, you are on the high-road to recovery, but you won't reach the goal, unless you treat the old woman, who is limping into the house yonder, as I do the birds I train."

"And what do you do?"

"Teach them to obey me, and if I see that they assert their own wills, sell them and seek others."

"You are not indebted to the stupid creatures for anything?"

"But I owe so much the more to the others, who do their duty."

"Quite true, and therefore you feed and keep them."

"Until they begin to grow old and refuse obedience."

"And then?"

"Then I give them to a peasant, on whose land they lay eggs, eat and die. The right farmer for your hens lives in Agrigentum."

Lysander shrugged his shoulders; and, as, leaning on his daughter, he tottered slowly forward, almost falling on the threshold, Xanthe took a silent vow to give him a son on whom he could firmly depend—a stalwart, reliable man.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO SUCKING-PIGS.

FIFTEEN minutes had passed, and the old house-keeper's face still glowed—no longer from anger, but because, full of zeal, she now moulded cakes before the bright flames on the hearth, now basted the roast on the spit with its own juices.

Beside her stood old Jason, who could not

give up his young master's cause for lost, and exposed himself once more to the arrows of Semestre's angry words, because he bitterly repented having irritated instead of winning her.

Unfortunately, his soothing speeches fell on hard ground, for Semestre scarcely vouchsafed a reply, and at last distinctly intimated that he interrupted her.

"Attention," she said, "is the mother of every true success. It is even more needful in cooking than in weaving; and if Leonax, for whom my hands are busy, resembles his father, he knows how to distinguish bad from good."

"Alciphron," replied Jason, "liked the figs on our arbor by the house better than yours."

"And while he was enjoying them," cried the old woman, "you beat him with a hazel rod. I can hear him cry now, poor little dear."

"Too many figs are bad for the stomach," replied the old man, very slowly and dis-

tinctly, but not too loud, that he might not remind her of her deafness. Then seeing Semestre smile, he drew nearer, and with winning cheerfulness continued: "Be sensible, and don't try to part the children, who belong to each other. Xanthe, too, is fond of figs, and, if Leonax shares his father's taste, how will the sweet fruit of your favorite trees fare, if Hymen unites them in marriage? Phaon doesn't care for sweet things. But seriously: though his father may seek twenty brides for him, he himself wants no one but Xanthe. And can you deny that he is a handsome, powerful fellow?"

"So is the other," cried Semestre, wholly unmoved by these words. "Have you seen your favorite this morning? No! Do you know where he slept last night and the night before?"

"On his couch, I suppose."

"In your house?"

"I don't run after the youth, now he is grown up."

"Neither shall we! You are giving your-

self useless trouble, Jason, and I earnestly beg you not to disturb me any longer now, for a dark spot is already appearing on the roast. Quick, Chloris—lift the spit from the fire!"

"I should like to bid Lysander good-morning."

"He is tired, and wants to see no one. The servants have vexed him."

"Then I'll stay awhile in the garden."

"To try your luck with Xanthe? I tell you, it's trouble wasted, for she's dressing her hair to receive our guest from Messina; and, if she were standing where those cabbage-leaves lie, she wouldn't contradict me if I were to repeat what you heard from my lips this morning at sunrise. Our girl will never become Phaon's wife until I myself offer a sacrifice to Aphrodite, that she may fill Xanthe's heart with love for him."

Jason shrugged his shoulders, and was preparing to turn his back on the old woman, when Dorippe entered and approached the hearth. Her eyes were red

with weeping, and in her arms she carried a round, yellowish-white creature that, struggling and stretching it's little legs in the air, squealed in a clear, shrill voice, even more loudly and piteously than a hungry babe.

It was a pretty, well-fattened sucking-pig.

Jason looked at it significantly, but Semestre snatched it out of the girl's arms, pressed it to her own bosom, turned her back upon the old man with resolute meaning, and said, just loud enough for him alone to hear:

"A roast for the banquet."

As soon as Jason had left the room, she put the nicely-washed pig on a little wooden bench, ordered Chloris to see that it did not soil itself; drew from a small box, standing beside the loom, one blue ribbon and two red ones; tied the former carefully around the little creature's curly tail, and the latter about its ears; lifted the pig again, looked at it as a mother gazes at her prettily-dressed darling, patted its fattest parts with her

right-hand, and ordered Dorippe to carry it to Aphrodite's temple immediately.

"It's a beautiful creature, absolutely faultless, and the priest must slay it at once in honor of the gracious goddess. I will come myself, as soon as everything is ready here; and, after such a gift, foam-born Cypris will surely grant my petition. Hide the little treasure carefully under your robe, that no one may see it."

"It struggles and squeals when I carry it," replied the girl.

"Yes, it does squeal," said the old woman. "Wait, I'll look for a suitable basket."

The house-keeper went out, and, when she returned, cried:

"Mopsus is standing outside with our donkey, to carry bag and baggage to his mother's house, but he's still in Lysander's service to-day. Let him put the creature in a basket on the donkey's back, and then he can quickly carry it to the temple—at once and without delay, for, if I don't find it on the goddess's altar in an hour, you shall

answer for it! Tell him this, and then get some rosemary and myrtle to garland our hearth."

Mopsus did not hasten to perform the errand. He had first to help Dorippe cut the green branches, and, while thus engaged, sought pleasant gifts not only on the ground, but from his sweetheart's red lips, then moved up the mountain with his donkey, very slowly, without urging the animal. The latter carried one basket on the right and one on the left of its saddle, wore bright cock's feathers on its head, and had a fiery-red bridle. It looked gay enough in its finery, yet hung its head, though far less sorrowfully than its young driver, whom Semestre had exiled from his master's house and the girl he loved.

He spent half an hour in reaching the sanctuary.

Old Jason, at the same time, was standing before the little grove beside the steps leading to the *cella*.

The worthy man cradled in his arms, as

Dorippe had just done in Lysander's house, a little squealing creature, and this, too, was a pig; but it wore no ribbon around its little tail and ears, was not particularly fat, and had numerous black spots under its scanty bristles and on its sharp snout.

The old man was gazing at the innocent creature by no means tenderly, but with the utmost indignation. He had good reason to be angry, for the priest had not thought it fit for a sacrifice to the goddess, it was so poor in fat and full of bad marks.

Alas, and Jason had no second pig, and was so eager to win the goddess to Phaon's cause.

As soon as he saw Semestre's offering, he had hurried home to anticipate her with his own, and first win the goddess's heart for his young master.

Now he stood considering whether he should strangle the unlucky creature, or carry it back to its mother.

Like a frugal steward, he decided upon the latter course, and, just as he was com-

paring the image of the lean, spotted animal with its future well-rounded condition, he heard the hoofs of the donkey driven by Mopsus, the heavy thud of a stick on the elastic flesh, and after every blow, the shout, "Semestre!"

Directly after Mopsus and his donkey reached the old man, and as the youth, without looking to the right or left, dealt the animal another thwack, again uttering the house-keeper's name, and in connection with it a succession of harsh, abusive words, Jason looked at the young man with approval, nay, almost tenderly.

The latter usually shouted a loud "Joy be with you!" whenever he met the old man, but to-day answered his greeting only with a sorrowful nod and low murmur.

The steward had stepped in front of him, laid his hard hand on the donkey's head, and asked:

"Do you call your ass Semestre?"

Mopsus blushed, and answered:

"In future I shall call all she-asses

that, but the old Megæra named this one *Jason.*"

"Why, see," cried the steward, "how kindly the worthy woman remembers me! But she, too, was not forgotten, for, whenever you lifted your stick, you thought, I should suppose, of her."

"Indeed I did!" cried Mopsus; then, while stroking the stripes on the donkey's flanks, added kindly:

"Poor Jason, you too have nothing for which to thank the old woman. If you only knew how abominable this woman is—"

"I do know," the steward interrupted, "but she is an old woman, and it does not beseem you to abuse her; she represents the house under its invalid ruler."

"I'd willingly lay both these hands under *his* feet," cried the youth, "but Semestre has driven me out of his service for nothing, away from here and Dorippe, and where can I find a place in the neighborhood?"

The almost whining tone of the complaint contrasted oddly with the appearance

of the tall, broad-shouldered Mopsus, yet tears filled his eyes, as he now told the steward about the juggler, the dance, Semestre's anger, his banishment from Lysander's house, and the house-keeper's commission to carry a sucking-pig to Aphrodite's temple for her.

Jason listened with only partial attention, for the low grunting of a pig, that reached his ears from one of the baskets on the donkey, seemed to him far more interesting than the poor fellow's story. He knew the ways of every domestic animal, and such sounds were only uttered by a little pig that felt comfortably fat, and lived under favorable circumstances.

A great thought awoke in his mind, and must have pleased him hugely, for his eyes began to sparkle, his mouth puckered in a smile, and he looked exactly like a satyr thrusting his thick lips toward the largest and ripest bunches of grapes in the vineyard.

When Mopsus paused, he angrily noticed

what an enlivening influence his sorrowful story had had upon the old man, but soon laughed too; for, ere he could give expression to his dissatisfaction, Jason had opened the basket on the left of the donkey, taken out Semestre's gayly-decked pig, put his own lanky animal in its place, and said, giggling with pleasure; "After what Semestre has done to a poor fellow like you, she doesn't deserve the favor of our goddess. Let *me* offer Aphrodite this most charming of pigs, and you offer my little beast in the house-keeper's name; then her petition will certainly find no hearing."

At these words Mopsus's broad face brightened, and, after laughing loudly, he struck his fist in the palm of his left hand, turned on the heel of his right foot, and exclaimed:

"Yes, that will be just right."

True, directly after, he looked as doubtful as if an invisible myrtle-staff had been swung over his back, and asked:

"But if she notices it?"

"I know how we'll manage it," replied the old man, and, putting Semestre's pig in Mopsus's arms, took the ribbons from its ears and curly tail.

Meantime, the little animal grunted as piteously as if it noticed that its finery was being stolen and its beauty impaired.

And when Jason, with Mopsus's assistance, put the same ribbons on his own lank pig, it looked neither better nor prouder than before, for it was no lucky animal and did not appreciate beautiful gifts.

CHAPTER V.

THE WALK TO THE SEA.

WHILE the priest of Aphrodite received Jason's gift, praised the pig's beauty, and promised to slay it immediately, but said he would only accept the lean animal Mopsus offered in Semestre's name for the sake of its ornaments and the giver, Xanthe came out of her father's house. She wore her

handsomest garments, and had carefully arranged her beautiful fair hair reflecting as she did so on many different things, for maidens are fond of thinking when seated at the loom or spinning-wheel, or quietly occupied in adorning their tresses.

Semestre followed close behind, and gave her a small knife, saying:

"It is seemly to decorate the door of a welcome guest with flowers. The bushes are full of roses now, so go and cut as many as will be needed for a handsome garland, but gather only red or yellow flowers, no white ones, for they bring no good fortune. You will find the largest below near the bench by the sea."

"I know."

"Wait and hear me out."

"Well?"

"The weather is delightful, there was a light breeze from the north during the night, so it may happen that the ship from Messina will arrive before noon."

"Then let me go down."

"Go and watch for the sails. If you see ours, hurry back and tell Chloris to call me, for I must go to the temple of Cypris."

"You?" asked Xanthe, laughing.

"*I*, and you are the last person who should sneer at the errand; nay, you can accompany me."

"No! I will cut the roses."

These words were uttered in a tone the house-keeper knew well. Whenever Xanthe used it, she insisted upon having her own way, and did what she pleased, while Semestre, who usually never admitted that her hearing was no longer so keen as in former days, in such cases willingly pleaded her deafness, in order to avoid a retreat.

To-day she particularly shrank from irritating the easily-excited girl, and therefore replied:

"What did you say? Wouldn't it be better for you to go and cut the roses immediately, my dove? Make haste, for the vessel for which you are to watch bears your happiness. How beautiful the ornaments

Leonax is bringing will look! We have never yet seen the like, I imagine. The people in Messina haven't forgotten poor me either, for I heard whispers about a robe such as matrons wear. It is—it might be—well, we shall see."

Tittering, and almost embarrassed, she fixed her eyes upon the ground, reminded Xanthe once more to have her called as soon as the ship from Messina appeared, and then, leaning on her myrtle-staff, tottered up the path leading to the temple of the goddess.

Xanthe did not go directly down to the sea, but approached her uncle's house to seek Phaon with her eyes.

As she could not see him, either in the stables, or the walk lined with fig-trees trained upon espaliers beside the house, she turned quickly away, repressing out of pride her desire to call him.

On her way to the sea she met her uncle's high-shouldered slave. Xanthe stopped and questioned him.

Semestre had told no lie. Phaon had not yet returned from a nocturnal excursion, and for several days had not reached home until just before sunrise.

No, *he* was not the man to offer support to her sick father. He was looking for a wealthy heiress, and forgot his relatives for the sake of dissolute young men and worthless wenches.

This thought hurt her sorely, so sorely that she wanted to weep as she had done by the spring.

But she forced back her tears; not one wet her cheeks, yet it seemed as if her poor heart had obtained eyes to shed them.

The little knife in her hand reminded her of her task of cutting roses, and watching for the ship which was to bring her uncle's son from Messina.

If Leonax was what Semestre described him, she would not repel him like the other suitors, whom she had rejected with laughing lips.

Yes, she would become his wife, not

only for her father's sake, but to punish Phaon.

Sorrow and pain never felt before filled her heart after making this resolution.

Wholly engrossed by these conflicting emotions, instead of going down to the sea, she walked straight on till she reached the great gate that led to her own home.

There she remembered the object of her errand, and was just turning back, when the conjurer, who was resting outside the gate with his cart in the shadow of the fence, called:

"You are obeying my advice, beautiful Xanthe, and move as thoughtfully as a sophist."

"Then you must not disturb me," cried the girl, raising her head defiantly.

"Pardon me if I do so," replied the other, "but I wanted to tell you that I might perhaps know of aid for your father. In my home—"

"Where is your home?"

"In Messina."

"Messina!" exclaimed Xanthe, eagerly.

"A very experienced physician lives there," interrupted the conjurer.

"No one has helped my father."

"Yet—"

"Then come in and speak to him."

"I'm afraid of the cross old woman."

"She has gone out, and you will find father alone."

"Then I'll go to him."

"Did you say you were from Messina?"

"That is my home."

"Do you know my uncle Alciphron, the merchant?"

"Certainly. He owns the most ships in the place."

"And his son Leonax, too?"

"I often saw him, for my hut stands opposite to the landing-place of your uncle's vessels, and the youth always superintends the loading and unloading. He, if any one, belongs to those spoiled children of fortune who disgust poor dwarfs like me with life,

and make us laugh when people say there are just gods above."

"You are blaspheming."

"I only say what others think."

"Yet you too were young once."

"But I was a dwarf, and he resembles Achilles in stature; I was poor and he does not know what to do with his wealth; maidens fled from me as they seek him; I was found in the streets; and a father still guides, a loving mother kisses him. I don't envy him, for whoever enters life an orphan is spared the pain of becoming one afterward."

"You speak bitter words."

"He who is beaten does not laugh."

"So you envy Leonax his prosperity?"

"No, for, though I might have such excellent cause to complain, I envy no king, for there is but one person whose inmost heart I know thoroughly, and that one stands before you."

"You revile Fate, and yet believe it possible that we may all have more sorrow to bear than you."

"You have understood me rightly."

"Then admit that you may be happier than many."

"If only most of the contented people were not stupid. However, this morning I am pleased, because your father gave me this new garment, and I rarely need despair; I earn enough bread, cheese, and wine with the aid of my hens, and am not obliged to ask any man's favor. I go with my cart wherever I choose."

"Then you ought to thank the gods, instead of accusing them."

"No, for absence of suffering is not happiness."

"And do you believe Leonax happy?"

"Hitherto he seems to be, and the fickle goddess will perhaps remain faithful to him longer than to many others, for he is busy from early till late, and is his father's right-hand. At least he won't fall into one of the pits Fate digs for mortals."

"And that is—?"

"Weariness. Thousands are worse, and

few better, than your cousin; yes, the maiden he chooses for his wife may rejoice."

Xanthe blushed, and the dwarf, as he entered the gate, asked:

"Is Leonax wooing his little cousin?"

"Perhaps."

"But the little cousin has some one else in her mind."

"Who told you so?"

"My hens."

"Then remember me to them!" cried Xanthe, who left the juggler and ran straight toward the path leading to the sea.

Just at the point where the latter branched off from the broader road used by carts as well as foot-passengers, stood a singular monument, before which the young girl checked her steps.

The praise the conjurer had lavished on Leonax afforded her little pleasure; nay, she would rather have heard censure of the Messina suitor, for, if he corresponded with the dwarf's portrait, he would be the right man to supply a son's place to her father,

and rule as master over the estate, where many things did not go on as they ought. Then she must forget the faithless night-reveller, Phaon—if she could.

Every possession seems most charming at the time we are obliged to resign it, and never in all her life had Xanthe thought so tenderly and longingly of Phaon as now and on this spot.

The monument, overgrown with blossoming vines, before which she paused, was a singular structure, that had been built of brick between her own and her uncle's garden.

It was in the form of a strong wall, bounded by two tall pillars. In the wall were three rows of deep niches with arched ceilings, while on the pillars, exquisitely painted upon a brownish-red ground, were the Genius of Death lowering his torch before an offering-altar, and Orpheus, who had released his wife from the realm of shadows and was now bearing her to the upper world.

Many of the niches were still empty, but in some stood vases of semi-transparent alabaster.

The newest, which had found a place in the lowest row, contained the ashes of the young girl's grandfather, Dionysius, and his wife, and another pair of urns the two mothers, her own and Phaon's.

Both had fallen victims on the same day to the plague, the only pestilence that had visited this bright coast within the memory of man. This had happened eight years ago.

At that time Xanthe was still a child, but Phaon a tall lad.

The girl passed this place ten times a day, often thought of the beloved dead, and, when she chanced to remember them still more vividly, waved a greeting to the dear ashes, because some impulse urged her to give her faithful memory some outward expression.

Very rarely did she recall the day when the funeral-pile had cooled, and the ashes of

the two mothers, both so early summoned to the realm of shadows, were collected, placed in the vases, and added to the other urns. But now she could not help remembering it, and how she had sat before one of the pillars of the monument weeping bitterly, and asking herself again and again, if it were possible that her mother would never, never come to kiss her, speak caressing words, arrange her hair and pet her; nay, for the first time, she longed to hear even a sharp reproof from the lips now closed forever.

Phaon was standing by the other pillar, his eyes covered with his right hand.

Never before or since had she seen him look so sad, and it cut her to the heart when she noticed that he trembled as if a chill had seized him, and, drawing a long breath, pushed back the hair, which like a coal-black curtain, covered half his forehead. She had wept bitterly, but he shed no tears. Only a few poor words were exchanged between them in that hour, but

each one still echoed in her ears to-day, as if hours instead of years intervened between that time and now.

"*Mine* was so good," Xanthe had sobbed; but he only nodded, and, after fifteen minutes had passed, said nothing but, "And mine too."

In spite of the long pause that separated the girl's words from the boy's, they were tenderly united, bound together by the thought, dwelling uninterruptedly in both childish hearts, "My mother was so good."

It was again Xanthe who, after some time, had broken the silence by asking:

"Whom have I now?"

Again it was long ere Phaon, for his only answer, could repeat softly:

"Yes, whom?"

They were trivial words, but they expressed the deep wretchedness which only a child's heart can feel.

Scarcely had they found their way over the boy's lips when he pressed his left hand also over his eyes, his breast heaved convul-

sively, and a torrent of burning tears coursed down his cheeks.

Both children still had their fathers, but they forgot them in this hour.

Who, if the warm sun were extinguished, would instantly remember that the moon and stars remain?

As Phaon wept so violently, Xanthe's tears began to flow more slowly, and she gazed at him a long time with ardent sympathy, unperceived by the lad, for he still covered his eyes with his hands.

The child had met a greater grief than her own, and, as soon as she felt that she was less sorrow-stricken than her playfellow, a desire to soothe his sorrow arose.

As the whole plant, with its flowers and fruit, is contained in the sprouting seed, so, too, in the youngest girl lives the future mother, who dries all tears, cheers and consoles.

As Phaon remained in the same attitude, Xanthe rose, approached him, timidly pulled his cloak, and said:

"Come down to our house; I will show you something pretty: four young doves have come out of the shell; they have big, wide bills, and are very ugly."

Her playmate removed his hands from his eyes and answered kindly:

"No, let me alone, please."

Xanthe now took his hand and drew him away, saying:

"Yes, you must come; the pole of my cart is broken."

Phaon had been so accustomed to be always called upon whenever there were any of the little girl's playthings to mend that he obeyed, and the next day allowed her to persuade him to do many things for which he felt no inclination.

He yielded in order not to grieve her, and, as he became more cheerful and even joined in her merry laugh, Xanthe rejoiced as if she had released him from his sorrow. From that time she claimed his services as eagerly as before, but in her own heart felt as if she were his little mother, and watched

all his actions as though specially commissioned to do so.

When she had grown up she did not hesitate to encourage or blame him, nay, was often vexed or grieved about him, especially if in the games or dances he paid more attention than she deemed reasonable to other girls, against whom there was much or little objection, nay, often none at all. Not on her own account, she said to herself, it could make no difference to her, but she knew these girls, and it was her duty to warn him.

She willingly forgave many things, but on this point was extremely rigid, and even allowed anger to carry her to the verge of rudeness.

Now, as she stood beside the sepulchre, she thought of the hour when she had comforted him, of her care for him and how it had all been vain, for he spent his nights in rioting with flute-playing women. Yes, Semestre had said so. He seemed to Xanthe lost, utterly lost.

When she wept in the morning beside the spring, it was not, she now thought, because of the heiress from Messina; no, the tears that had sprung to her eyes were like those a mother sheds for her erring son.

She seemed to herself extremely venerable, and would have thought it only natural if gray hair instead of golden had adorned the head over which scarcely seventeen years had passed.

She even assumed the gait of a dignified matron, but it was hardly like a mother, when, on her way to the rose-bushes by the sea, she studiously strove to misunderstand and pervert everything good in Phaon, and call his quiet nature indolence, his zeal to be useful to her weakness, his taciturn manner mere narrow-mindedness, and even his beautiful, dreamy eyes sleepy.

With all this, the young girl found little time to think of the new suitor; she must first shatter the old divine image, but every blow of the hammer hurt her as if it fell upon herself.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ANSWER.

THE rose-bush to which Xanthe went grew on the dike that belonged in common to her father and uncle, beside a bench of beautifully-polished white marble.

Many a winter had loosened the different blocks, and bordered them with yellow edges.

Even at a distance the girl saw that the seat was not vacant. The brook that flowed from the spring to the sea ran beneath it, and the maid-servants were in the habit of washing the household linen in its swift current.

Were they now using the bench to spread out the garments they had rinsed?

No! A man lay on the hard marble, a man who had drawn his light cloak over his face to protect himself from the rays of the sun, now rising higher and higher.

His sandaled feet and ankles, bandaged as if for journeying, appeared beneath the covering.

By these feet Xanthe quickly recognized the sleeping youth.

It was Phaon. She would have known him, even if she had seen only two of his fingers.

The sun would soon reach its meridian height, and there he lay asleep.

At first it had startled her to find him here, but she soon felt nothing but indignation, and again the image of the flute-playing women, with whom he must have revelled until thus exhausted, rose before her mind.

"Let him sleep," she murmured proudly and contemptuously; she passed him, cut a handful of roses from the bushes covered with crimson and yellow blossoms, sat down on the vacant space beside his head, watched for the ship from Messina, and, as it did not come, began to weave the garland.

She could do the work here as well as anywhere else, and told herself that it was

all the same to her whether Phaon or her father's linen lay there. But her heart belied these reflections, for it throbbed so violently that it ached.

And why would not her fingers move; why could her eyes scarcely distinguish the red roses from the yellow ones?

The garden was perfectly still, the sea seemed to slumber, and, if a wave lapped the shore, it was with a low, almost inaudible murmur.

A butterfly hovered like a dream over her roses, and a lizard glided noiselessly, like a sudden thought, into a chink between the stones at her feet. Not a breath of air stirred, not a leaf or a twig fell from the trees.

Yonder, as if slumbering under a blue veil, lay the Calabrian coast, while nearer and more distant, but always noiselessly, ships and boats, with gently swelling sails, glided over the water. Even the cicadas seemed to sleep, and everything around was as still, as horribly still, as if the breath of

the world, blooming and sparkling about her, was ready to fail.

Xanthe sat spellbound beside the sleeper, while her heart beat so rapidly and strongly that she fancied it was the only sound audible in this terrible silence.

The sunbeams poured fiercely on her head, her cheeks glowed, a painful anxiety overpowered her, and certainly not to rouse Phaon, but merely to hear some noise, she coughed twice, not without effort. When she did so the third time, the sleeper stirred, removed from his face the end of the cloak that had covered his head, slowly raised himself a little, and, without changing his recumbent posture, said simply and quietly, in an extremely musical voice:

"Is that you, Xanthe?"

The words were low, but sounded very joyous.

The girl merely cast a swift glance at the speaker, and then seemed as busily occupied with her roses as if she were sitting entirely alone.

"Well?" he asked again, fixing his large dark eyes upon her with an expression of surprise, and waiting for some greeting.

As she remained persistently silent, he exclaimed, still in the same attitude:

"I wish you a joyful morning, Xanthe."

The young girl, without answering this greeting, gazed upward to the sky and sun as long as she could endure the light, but her lips quivered, and she flung the rose she held in her hand among its fellows in her lap.

Phaon had followed the direction of her look, and again broke the silence, saying with a smile, no less quietly than before:

"Yes, indeed, the sun tells me I've been sleeping here a long time; it is almost noon."

The youth's composure aroused a storm of indignation in Xanthe's breast. Her excitable blood fairly seethed, and she was obliged to put the utmost constraint upon herself not to throw her roses in his face.

But she succeeded in curbing her wrath,

and displaying intense eagerness, as she shaded her eyes with her hand and gazed toward some ships that appeared in view.

"I don't know what is the matter with you," said Phaon, smoothing with his right hand the black hair that covered half his forehead. "Do you expect the ship from Messina and my father already?"

"And my cousin *Leonax*" replied the girl, quickly, putting a strong emphasis upon the last name.

Then she again gazed into the distance.

Phaon shook his head, and both remained silent for several minutes. At last he raised himself higher, turned his full face toward the young girl, gazed at her as tenderly and earnestly as if he wished to stamp her image upon his soul for life, gently pulled the long, floating sleeve of her peplum, and said:

"I didn't think it would be necessary—but I must ask you something."

While he spoke, Xanthe rested her right elbow on her knee, drummed on her scarlet lips with her fingers, and clasped the back

of the marble bench with her out-stretched left arm.

Her eyes told him that she was ready to listen, though she still uttered no word of reply.

"I have a question to ask you, Xanthe!" continued Phaon.

"You?" interrupted the girl, with visible astonishment.

"I, who else? Jason told me yesterday evening that our uncle Alciphron had wooed you for his son Leonax, and was sure of finding a favorable reception from old Semestre and your poor father. I went at once to ask you if it were true, but turned back again, for there were other things to be done, and I thought we belonged to each other, and you could not love any one so well as you loved me. I don't like useless words, and cannot tell you what is in my heart, but you knew it long ago. Now you are watching for your cousin Leonax. We have never seen him, and I should think—"

"But I know," interrupted the girl, rising so hastily that her roses fell unheeded on the ground—"but I know he is a sensible man, his father's right-hand, a man who would disdain to riot all night with flute-playing women, and to woo girls only because they are rich."

"I don't do that either," replied Phaon. "Your flowers have dropped on the ground—"

With these words the youth rose, bent over the roses, gathered them together, and offered them to Xanthe with his left hand, while trying to clasp her fingers in his right; but she drew back, saying:

"Put them on the bench, and go up to wash the sleep from your eyes."

"Do I look weary?"

"Of course, though you've lain here till noon."

"But I have scarcely slept for several days."

"And dare you boast of it?" asked Xanthe, with glowing cheeks. "I am not

your mother, and you must do as you choose, but if you think I belonged to you because we played with each other as children, and I was not unwilling to give you my hand in the dance, you are mistaken. I care for no man who turns day into night and night into day."

At the last words Xanthe's eyes filled with tears, and Phaon noticed it with astonishment.

He gazed at her sadly and beseechingly, and then fixed his eyes on the ground. At last he began to suspect the cause of her anger, and asked, smiling:

"You probably mean that I riot all night?"

"Yes!" cried Xanthe; she withdrew her hand for the second time, and half turned away.

"Oh!" he replied, in a tone of mingled surprise and sorrow, "you ought not to have believed that."

Xanthe turned, raised her eyes in astonishment, and asked:

"Then where have you been these last nights?"

"Up in your olive-grove with the three Hermes."

"You?"

"How amazed you look!"

"I was only thinking of the wicked fellows who have robbed many trees of their fruit. That savage Korax, with his thievish sons, lives just beside the wall."

"For your sake, Xanthe, and because your poor father is ill and unable to look after his property, while Mopsus and your fishermen and slaves were obliged to go in the ship to Messina, to handle the oars and manage the sails, I always went up as soon as it grew dark."

"And have you kept watch there?"

"Yes."

"So many nights?"

"One can sleep after sunrise."

"How tired you must be!"

"I'll make up my sleep when my father returns."

"They say he is seeking the rich Mentor's only daughter for your wife."

"Not with my will, certainly."

"Phaon!"

"I am glad you will give me your hand again."

"You dear, good, kind fellow, how shall I thank you?"

"Anything but that! If you hadn't thought such foolish things about me, I should never have spoken of my watch up yonder. Who could have done it except myself, before Mopsus came back?"

"No one, no one but you! But now—now ask your question at once."

"May I? O Xanthe, dear, dear Xanthe, will you have me or our cousin Leonax for your husband?"

"You, you, only you, and nobody else on earth!" cried the girl, throwing both arms around him. Phaon clasped her closely, and joyously kissed her brow and lips.

The sky, the sea, the sun, everything near or distant that was bright and beauti-

ful, was mirrored in their hearts, and it seemed to both as if they heard all creatures that sing, laugh, and rejoice. Each thought that, in the other, he or she possessed the whole world with all its joy and happiness. They were united, wholly united, there was nothing except themselves, and thus they became to each other an especially blissful world, beside which every other created thing sank into nothingness.

Minute after minute passed, nearly an hour had elapsed, and, instead of making garlands, Xanthe clasped her arms around Phaon's neck; instead of gazing into the distant horizon, she looked into his eyes; instead of watching for approaching steps, both listened to the same sweet words which lovers always repeat, and yet never grow weary of speaking and hearing.

The roses lay on the ground, the ship from Messina ran into the bay beside the estate, and Semestre hobbled down to the sea to look for Xanthe, and in the place of the master of the house receive

her favorite's son, who came as a suitor, like a god.

She repeatedly called the girl's name before reaching the marble bench, but always in vain.

When she had at last reached the myrtle-grove, which had concealed the lovers from her eyes, she could not help beholding the unwelcome sight.

Xanthe was resting her head on Phaon's breast, while he bent down and kissed her eyes, her mouth, and at last—who ever did such things in her young days?—even her delicate little nose.

For several minutes Semestre's tongue seemed paralyzed, but at last she raised both arms, and a cry of mingled indignation and anguish escaped her lips.

Xanthe started up in terror, but Phaon remained sitting on the marble bench, held the young girl's hand in his own, and looked no more surprised than if some fruit had dropped from the tree beside him.

The youth's composure increased the old

woman's fury, and her lips were just parting to utter a torrent of angry words, when Jason stepped as lightly as a boy between her and the betrothed lovers, cast a delighted glance at his favorites, and bowing with comic dignity to Semestre cried, laughing:

"The two will be husband and wife, my old friend, and ought to ask your blessing, unless you wickedly intend to violate a solemn vow."

"I will—I will! When did I—" shrieked the house-keeper.

"Didn't you," interrupted Jason, raising his voice—"didn't you vow this morning that you would prepare Phaon's wedding-feast with your own hands as soon as you yourself offered a sacrifice to the Cyprian goddess to induce her to unite their hearts?"

"And I'll stick to it, so surely as the gracious goddess—"

"I hold you to your promise!" exclaimed Jason. "Your sucking-pig has just been offered to Aphrodite. The priest gladly

accepted it and slaughtered it before my eyes, imploring the goddess with me, to fill Xanthe's heart with love for Phaon."

The house-keeper clinched her hands, approached Jason, and so plainly showed her intention of attacking him that the steward, who had assailed many a wild-boar, retreated—by no means fearlessly.

She forced him back to the marble bench, screaming:

"So that's why the priest found no word of praise for my beautiful pig! You're a thief, a cheat! You took my dear little pig, which all the other gods might envy the mother of Eros, put in its place a wretched animal just like yourself, and falsely said it came from me. Oh, I see through the whole game! That fine Mopsus was your accomplice; but so true as I—"

"Mopsus has entered our service," replied Jason, laughing; "and, if our Phaon's bride will permit, he wants to wed the dark-haired Dorippe. Henceforth our property is yours."

"And ours yours," replied Xanthe—"Be good-natured, Semestre; I will marry no man but Phaon, and shall soon win my father over to our side, rely upon that."

The house-keeper was probably forced to believe these very resolute words, for, like a vanquished but skilful general, she began to think of covering her retreat, saying:

"I was outwitted; but, what I vowed in a moment of weakness, I have now sworn again. I am only sorry for your poor father, who needed a trustworthy son, and the good Leonax—"

At this moment, as if he had heard his name and obediently appeared at her call, the son of Alciphron, of Messina, appeared with Phaon's father, Protarch, from the shadow of the myrtle-grove.

He was a gay, handsome youth, richly and carefully dressed. After many a pressure of the hand and cordial words of welcome, Phaon took the young girl's hand and led her to the new-comers, saying:

"Give me Xanthe for a wife, my father.

We have grown up together like the ivy and wild vine on the wall, and cannot part."

"No certainly not," added Xanthe, blushing and nestling closely to her lover's side, as she gazed beseechingly first at her uncle, and then at the young visitor from Messina.

"Children, children!" cried Protarch, "you spoil my best plans. I had destined Agariste, the rich Mentor's only child, for you, foolish boy, and already had come to terms with the old miser. But who can say I *will*, or this and that shall happen to-morrow? You are very sweet and charming my girl, and I don't say that I shouldn't be glad, but—mighty Zeus! what will my brother Alciphron say—and you, Leonax?"

"I?" asked the young man, smiling. "I came here like a dutiful son, but I confess I rejoice over what has happened, for now my parents will hardly say 'No' a second time, when I beg them to give me Codrus's daughter, Ismene, for my wife."

"And there stands a maiden who seems to like to hear such uncivil words better than

Helen loved Paris's flattering speeches!" exclaimed Phaon's father, first kissing his future daughter's cheek and then his son's forehead.

"But now let us go to father," pleaded Xanthe.

"Only one moment," replied Protarch "to look after the boxes the people are bringing.—Take care of the large chest with the Phœnician dishes and matron's robes, my lads."

During the first moments of the welcome, Semestre had approached her darling's son, told him who she was, received his father's messages of remembrance, kissed his hand, and stroked his arm.

His declaration that he wished another maiden than Xanthe for his wife soothed her not a little, and when she now heard of matrons' dresses, and not merely *one* robe, her eyes sparkled joyously, and, fixing them on the ground, she asked:

"Is there a blue one among them? I'm particularly fond of blue."

"I've selected a blue one, too," replied Protarch. "I'll explain for what purpose up yonder. Now we'll go and greet my brother."

Xanthe, hand in hand with her lover, hurried on in advance of the procession, lovingly prepared her father for what had happened, told him how much injustice he, old Semestre, and she herself had done poor Phaon, led the youth to him, and, deeply agitated, sank on her knees before him as he laid her hand in her playfellow's, exclaiming in a trembling voice:

"I have always loved you, curly-head, and Xanthe wants you for her husband. Then I, too, should have a son!—Hear, lofty Olympians, a good, strong, noble son! Help me up, my boy. How well I feel! Haven't I gained in you two stout legs and arms? Only let the old woman come to me to-day! The conjurer taught me how to meet her."

Leaning on Phaon's strong shoulder he joyously went out of the house, greeted his

handsome young nephew as well as his brother, and said:

"Let Phaon live with Xanthe in my house, which will soon be his own, for I am feeble and need help."

"With all my heart," cried Protarch, "and it will be well on every account, for, for—well, it must come out, for I, foolish graybeard—"

"Well?" asked Lysander, and Semestre curved her hand into a shell and held it to her ear to hear better.

"I—just look at me—I, Protarch, Dionysius's son, can no longer bear to stay in the house all alone with that silent youth and old Jason, and so I have—perhaps it is a folly, but certainly no crime—so I have chosen a new wife in Messina."

"Protarch!" cried Lysander, raising his hands in astonishment; but Phaon nodded to his father approvingly, exchanging a joyous glance with Xanthe.

"He has chosen my mother's younger sister," said Leonax.

"The younger, yes, but not the youngest," interrupted Protarch. "You must have your wedding in three days, children. Phaon will live here in your house, Lysander, with his Xanthe, and I in the old one yonder with my Praxilla. Directly after your marriage I shall go back to Messina with Leonax and bring home my wife."

"We have long needed a mistress in the house, and I bless your bold resolution!" exclaimed Jason.

"Yes, you were always brave," said the invalid.

"But not so very courageous this time as it might seem," answered Protarch, smiling. "Praxilla is an estimable widow, and it was for her I purchased in Messina the matron's robes for which you asked, Semestre."

"For her?" murmured the old woman.

"There is a blue one among them too, which will be becoming, for she has light brown hair very slightly mixed with gray. But she is cheerful, active, and clever, and will aid Phaon and Xanthe in their young

house-keeping with many a piece of good advice."

"I shall go to my daughter in Agrigentum," said Semestre, positively.

"Go," replied Lysander, kindly, "and enjoy yourself in your old age on the money you have saved."

"Which my father," added Leonax, "will increase by the sum of a thousand drachmae."

"My Alciphron has a heart!" cried the house-keeper.

"You shall receive from me, on the day of your departure, the same sum and a matron's blue robe," said Lysander.

Shortly after the marriage of Xanthe and Phaon, Semestre went to live with her daughter.

The dike by the sea was splendidly repaired without any dispute, for the estate once more belonged to the two brothers in common, and Xanthe found in Praxilla a new, kind mother.

The marble seat, on which the young

people's fate was decided, was called by the grandchildren of the wedded pair, who lived to old age in love and harmony, "the bench of the question."

THE END.

GEORG EBERS

THE ELIXIR

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS

THE ELIXIR

Translated from the German by
Mrs. Edward Hamilton Bell

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CONTENTS.

PAGE

THE ELIXIR, ... 1

THE GREYLOCK, A FAIRY TALE, ... 121

THE NUTS, A CHRISTMAS STORY, ... 227

THE ELIXIR.

Every Leipziger knows well the tall gabled house in the Katherinenstrasse which I have in mind. It stands not far from the Market Place, and is particularly dear to the writer of this true story because it has been in the possession of his family for a long time. Many curious things have happened there worthy of being rescued from oblivion, and though my relatives would now like to relieve me of this task, because I have found it necessary to point out to certain ingenuous ones among them the truth which they were endeavoring to conceal, I rejoice that I have sufficient leisure to chronicle for future generations of Ueberhells the wonderful life and doings of their progenitor as I learned them from my grandmother and other good people.

So here, then, begins my story.

Of old, the aforementioned house was known as "The Three Kings," but in no otherwise was it distinguished from its neighbours in the street save through the sign of the Court apothecary on the ground-floor; this hung over the arched doorway, and gay with bright colour and gilding represented the three patron Saints of the craft: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar.

This house in the Katherinenstrasse continued to be called "The Three Kings," although, soon after the death of old Caspar Ueberhell, the sign was removed, and the shop closed. And many things happened to it and the house which ran counter to the usual course of events and the wishes of the worthy burghers.

Gossip there had been in plenty even during the lifetime of the old Court apothecary whose only son Melchior had left his father's house and Leipsic not merely to spend a few years in Prague, or

Paris or Italy like any other son of well-to-do parents who wished to perfect himself in his studies, but, as it would seem, for good and all.

Both as school-boy and student Melchior had been one of the most gifted and most brilliant, and many a father, whose son took a wicked delight in wanton and graceless escapades, had with secret envy congratulated old Ueberhell on having such an exceptionally talented, industrious and obedient treasure of a son and heir. But later not one of these men would have exchanged his heedless scrapegrace of a boy for the much bepraised paragon of the Court apothecary, since, after all, a bad son is better than none at all.

Melchior, in fact, came not home, and that this weighed on the mind of the old man and hastened his death was beyond doubt; for although the stately Court apothecary's rotund countenance remained

as round and beaming as the sun for three years after the departure of his boy, it began gradually to lose its plumpness and radiance until at length it was as faded and yellow as the pale half moon, and the cheeks that had once been so full hung down on his ruff like little empty sacks. He also withdrew more and more from the weighing house and the Raths-keller where he had once so loved to pass his evenings in the company of other worthy burghers, and he was heard to speak of himself now and then as a "lonely man." Finally he stayed at home altogether, perhaps because his face and the whites of his eyes had turned as yellow as the saffron in his shop. There he left Schimmel, the dispenser, and the apprentice entirely in charge, so that if any one wished to avoid the Court apothecary that was the surest place. When, in the end, he died at the age of fifty-six, the physicians stated that it was his liver—the

seat of sorrow as well as of anger—which had been overtaxed and abused.

It is true that no one ever heard a word of complaint against his son pass his lips, indeed it was certain that to the very last he was well acquainted with his son's whereabouts; for when he was asked for news, he answered at first: "He is finishing his studies in Paris," later: "He seems to have found in Padua what he is seeking," and towards the end: "I think that he will be returning very soon now from Bologna."

It was also noticeable that instead of taking advantage of such questioning to give vent to his displeasure he would smile contentedly and stroke his chin, once so round, but then so peaked, and those who thought that the Court apothecary would diminish his legacy to his truant son, learned to know better, for the old man bequeathed in an elaborate will, the whole of his valuable possessions to Melchior, leaving only to

the widow Vorkel, who had served him faithfully as housekeeper after the death of his wife, and to Schimmel, the dispenser, in the event of the shop being closed, a yearly stipend to be paid to the end of their days. To his beloved daughter-in-law, the estimable daughter of the learned Dr. Vitali, of Bologna, the old man left his deceased wife's jewels, together with the plate and linen of the house, mentioning her in the most affectionate terms.

All of which surprised the legal gentlemen and the relatives and connections and their wives and feminine following not a little, and what put the finishing stroke to the disgust of these good folk, especially to such of them as were mothers, was that this son and heir of an honoured and wealthy house had married a foreigner, a frivolous Italian, and that too without so much as an intimation of his intention.

With the will there was a letter from the

dead man to his son and one to the worthy lawyer. In the latter he requested his counsellor to notify his son, Melchior Ueberhell, of his death, and, in case of his son's return home, to see him well and fairly established in the position which belonged to him as the heir of a Leipsic burgher and as Doctor of the University of Padua.

These letters were sent by the first messenger going south over the Alps, and that they reached Melchior will be seen from the fresh surprises contained in his answer.

He commissioned Anselmus Winckler, an excellent notary, and formerly his most intimate school friend, to close the apothecary shop and to sell privately whatever it contained. But a small quantity of every drug was to be reserved for his own personal use. He also, in his carefully chosen diction begged the honourable notary to allow the Italian architect Olivetti, who would soon present himself, to rebuild the old house of

"The Three Kings" throughout, according to the plan which they had agreed upon in Bologna. The side of the house that faced the street would not, be hoped, prove unpleasing, as for the arrangement of the interior, that was to be made in accordance with his own taste and needs, and to please himself alone.

These wishes seemed reasonable enough to the lawyer, and as the Italian architect, who arrived a few weeks later in Leipsic, laid before him a plan showing the façade of a burgher's house finished with a stately gable which rose by five successive steps to its peak crowned by a statue of the armed goddess Minerva with the owl at her feet, no objection could be made to such an addition to the city, although some of the clergy did not hesitate to express their displeasure at the banishment of the Three Saints in favor of a heathen goddess, and at the height of the middle chimney which seemed to have

entered the lists against the church towers.

However, the rebuilding was put in hand, and, of course, the business had to be wound up and the shop closed before the old front was torn down.

Schimmel, the gray-haired dispenser, married the widow Vorkel, who had kept house for the late Herr Ueberhell. These two might have related many strange occurences to the cousins and kin had they chosen, but he was a reserved man, and she had been so sworn to silence, and had lived through such an agitating experience before the death of the old man that she repulsed all questioners so sharply that they dared not return to the charge.

The old housekeeper as she watched the deserted father grow indifferent to what he had to eat and drink—though he had once been so quick to appreciate the dishes which she prepared so deftly—and neglectful of the attentions which he had been wont to pay

to the outside world, became embittered towards Melchior whom she had carried in her arms and loved like her own child. In former times Herr Ueberhell had been accustomed now and then to invite certain friends to dine with him, and these guests had praised her cooking, but later, and more especially after the death of his cousin and colleague, Blumentrost, who had also been his master, he had asked no one into his well-appointed house.

This retirement of the dignified and hospitable burgher was undoubtedly caused by the absence of his son, but in a very different way to what people supposed; for although the old man longed for his only child, he was very far from resenting his absence; indeed the widow Vorkel herself knew that it was the father who had dissuaded the son from returning from Italy until he had reached the goal for which he was striving with unwearied energy.

She also knew that Melchior gave the old man precise information of his progress in every letter, and that when her master turned over the care of the shop to Schimmel, the dispenser, it was only because he had arranged a laboratory for himself on the first floor, where, following the directions received in his son's letters, he worked with his crucibles and retorts, pots and tubes, early and late before the fire. Yet despite this, the housekeeper saw that the longing for his son was gnawing at the old man's heart, and had she been able to write she would have let Melchior know how things stood and begged him to return to Leipsic. "But there ought to be no need to tell him," she would reflect in her leisure moments, "He must know it himself," and for this reason she would force herself as well as she could to be angry with him.

Thus the years passed. Nevertheless, her anger flew to the winds when one day

a messenger arrived bringing a little package from Italy and the master called her into the laboratory. Then the old withered love suddenly came to life once more and put forth new leaves and buds, for what she saw was indeed something wonderful; the Court apothecary held out to her in his carefully washed hands a sheet of gray paper on which in red crayon was an exquisite drawing of a beautiful young woman with a lovely child on her lap. Then, having charged her not to speak of it to any one, he confided to her that this beautiful woman was Melchior's young wife, and the little boy their first-born and his grandchild who would carry on the name of Ueberhell. He had given his consent to his son's marriage with the daughter of his master in Bologna and now he—old Caspar Ueberhell—was the happiest of men, and when the doctor returned to him with wife and child and the thing for which he was so earnestly search-

ing, why, he would not envy the emperor on his throne. When the widow Vorkel noticed the tears that were streaming down the old man's sunken cheeks, her eyes too began to overflow, and after that she often crept to the chest where the portrait was kept to gaze on the little one and to press her lips on the same spot whence the grandfather's had already worn away some of the red crayon.

Herr Ueberhell's joy had been so great that now the longing for his son took deeper hold of him, and he lost strength day by day, yet Frau Vorkel could not persuade him to see a physician. He often, however, inhaled deep draughts of a concoction that he had made in the laboratory with his son's letter before him, and as he seemed to derive no benefit from it he would distil it again and mix with it new drugs.

One evening—after having spent the whole day in the laboratory—he retired un-

usually early, and when Frau Vorkel went into his room to carry him his "nightcap" he forgot his usual amiable and suave manner and growled out at her angrily: "After all these years, can't you prepare my bed for the night without making me burn myself? Must you be inattentive as well as stupid?"

Never had she heard such a speech as this from her kindly master, and when from fright she tipped the tray which she was carrying and spilled some of the mulled wine over her gown, he cried sharply: "Where *are* your wits! First you forget to take the red hot warming-pan out of the bed and now you old goose you spill my good drink onto the floor."

He stopped, for Frau Vorkel had set down the tray on the table in order to wipe her eyes with her apron; then he thrust his feet out of the bed—which was entirely contrary to his usual decorous behavior—and

demanded with flashing eyes: "Did you hear what I just said?"

The widow, greatly shocked, retreated and answered sobbing: "How could I help hearing, and how can you bring yourself to insult an unprotected widow who has served you long and faithfully. . . ."

"I have done it, I have done it," the old man cried, his eyes glistening with joy and pride as if he had just accomplished an heroic undertaking. "I am sorry I called you a goose, and as for your lack of brains, well you might have a few more, but, and this I can assure you, you are honest and true and understand your business, and if you will only be as good to me as I have always been to you. . . ."

"Oh, Herr. . . ." Widow Vorkel interrupted him, and covered her face with her apron; but he would not let her finish her sentence, so great was his excitement and continued in a hoarse voice: You

must grant what I ask, Vorkel, after all these years, and if you will, you must take that little phial there and inhale its contents, and when you have done so you must let me ask you some questions."

After much persuasion, the housekeeper yielded to the wishes of her master, and while she still held the little bottle from which the ether escaped, to her nose, the Court apothecary questioned her hastily: "Do you think that I have always acted like a man, diligently striving for the good of himself and his house?"

Some strange change seemed to take place in Frau Vorkel; she planted her hands on her hips most disrespectfully—a thing she never did except perhaps when she was scolding the maid or the butcher boy—and laughed loud and scornfully: "My, what a question! You may, perhaps, have a larger stock of useless information than an old woman like me,—though strictly

speaking I cannot be called an old woman yet—but despite my being stupid and a "goose," I have always been wiser than you, and *I* know which side one's bread is buttered on. Bless me! And is there anything more idiotic than that you, the father of the best son in the world, should sit here alone, fretting yourself yellow and lean until from a stately looking man you grow to be a scarecrow, when one word from you would bring your only child back again and with him the wife and sweet grandchild, that you might all enjoy life together! If that isn't sheer folly and a sin and a shame. . . ."

Here she checked herself, for her habitually decorous master stood before her in his night shirt, barefooted, and laughed loud and merrily, clapping himself boisterously on his wasted ribs and on the shrunken thighs that carried his thin body. The precise widow was very much upset, she was also horrified at the insolent answer

which,—she knew not how,—had just passed her lips. She endeavored to find some words of excuse but they were not necessary, for the Court apothecary called out, "Magnificent! Glorious! May all the saints be praised, we have found it." And before the worthy woman knew what he was about the gray-haired invalid had caught her in his arms and kissed her heartily on both cheeks. But the happy excitement had been too much for him and with a low groan he sank down on the edge of the bed and sobbed bitterly.

Frau Vorkel was greatly disturbed for she guessed—and it would seem with reason—that her good master had gone out of his mind. But she presently changed her opinion, for after he had cried unrestrainedly until he was exhausted, Herr Ueberhell gave her a prompt proof of his sanity and returning health. In his kindly and polite manner of former times, he

begged her to set out in the kitchen a bottle of the oldest and best Bacharacher. There he bade her bring a second glass and invited her to drink, and clink glasses with him because the greatest piece of good luck had happened to him that day that it was in the power of the blessed saints to grant to mortal man. He, the father, had discovered in Leipsic what his son had sought in vain at all the most famous Universities of Italy, and if he should succeed in one remaining step, the fame of the Ueberhells, like that of the Roman Horatii, would reach to the skies.

Then he became more serious and confessed that he was very weak and broken, and that when he had gone to bed earlier in the evening he had felt that his last hour was not far distant. Death itself sometimes floats 'twixt cup and lip, as has been remarked by a heathen philosopher, and if he should be called away before he had seen

Melchior again, then must she be his messenger and tell his son that he had found that part of the White Lion, of the white tincture of *argentum potabile* or potable silver, which his letter had put him on the track of. His son would know what he meant, and to-morrow he would write down the particulars if he should succeed that night in finding again the substance through which he had attained to the greatest wonder that science had achieved since the days of Adam.

He emptied bumper after bumper and clinked glasses at least a dozen times with Frau Vorkel, who was immensely tickled with the unwonted honour.

After that he drew his chair closer to hers that he might better impress upon her what she was to say to Melchior. He began by telling her that she could never understand the full meaning of what had happened but that she must take his word

for it, he had discovered an elixir whose effect was most wonderful and would change the whole course of events. From now onwards, lying would be impossible, the reign of truth was at hand and deceit had been routed from its last stronghold.

As she, however, shrank back from him, still somewhat fearful, he demanded loftily if she ever would have dared to announce to him, her old master, so candidly what she thought of him, as she had done an hour ago, if she had not inhaled the contents of the phial. And Frau Vorkel had to admit that she had been forced by some occult power to utter those disrespectful speeches. She looked with awed wonder, first at her master, then at the little bottle, and suddenly broke out with: "My! My! What will be left for the judges to do when everyone can be forced to speak out boldly and disclose his smallest sin. My! My! But then we shall hear pretty tales!

From the Burgomaster down, everyone in Leipsic will have to get a new pair of ears, for what one hears will be as outrageous and unseemly as among the savages."

These observations showed the Court apothecary that Frau Vorkel had, despite her want of intelligence, grasped to a certain extent the importance of his discovery; while this pleased him in a way, it also made him uneasy, therefore he made her swear on the crucifix that so long as she lived she would never impart to any living soul, his son excepted, what she had that evening experienced.

Then Herr Ueberhell went back to his search for the unknown element which had given to his son's elixir the power that had been exhibited in such wonderful fashion. But he did not succeed in finding the right ingredient, for as often as he called Frau Vorkel to come and inhale the new mixture, she gave such plausible and politic answers

to his dangerous questions that he could be by no means sure of her absolute truthfulness. Then too the operations progressed slowly because that day at noon his finger had been badly cut by the bursting of a glass retort. So presently he ceased work for a while and insisted that Frau Vorkel should take the phial in her own hand and inhale its contents once more, because it pleased him to try the power of the elixir.

With an amused smile he asked her if she used the great quantities of wool, which she so constantly demanded, for no other purpose than to knit socks for him.

The phial trembled in the hand of the housekeeper, and before she could help it her response had passed her lips:

"You have all the socks that you need and it is surely no great crime for me to knit a few pairs to warm the feet of your assistant, that poor, silent worm who stands downstairs the livelong day in the cold shop."

Despite this reply Herr Ueberhell only laughed and continued the inquisition gaily. He next wished to know who was dearer to the heart of the housekeeper, the assistant or her late husband, to which she rejoined: "Why should I lament Vorkel? He was a bully, who never could learn how to cut out a coat, and always stole his customers' cloth." At that moment there was an ominous crash on the floor, and a powerful odour filled the laboratory; the phial had slipped from the hands of the frightened woman.

What happened after that Frau Vorkel even in her old age shuddered to recall. How it could have been possible for the amiable and pious Court apothecary to give utterance to such objurgations and invectives, such sacrilegious curses and anathemas, and how she, a respectable and proper woman, of good Leipsic people, ever could have allowed herself to attack any one,

least of all her excellent master, in such abusive language were problems she could never solve.

Yet they must not be censured for their use of Billingsgate, for the strong aroma of the elixir forced them to tear aside the veil which in Leipsic, as elsewhere, clothes the ugly truth as with a pleasing garment, and to lay bare all the rancour that filled their hearts.

Later when she thought about the breaking of the phial, the conviction grew upon her limited intelligence that this accident would perhaps prove in the end to be the best thing that could have happened, not only for her but for all mankind. To her excellent master, at least, the Elixir of Truth proved fatal all too soon; the intense excitement of that night had shaken him so cruelly that before the day dawned the feeble flame of his life had flickered out.

Frau Vorkel found him dead the next

morning in his laboratory. He must have gone thither to seek once more for the lost substance after she had helped him to bed. Before he had begun his work he must have wished to encourage himself by a glance at the portrait of his grandchild, for as she opened the door the sheet of paper with the red crayon drawing was wafted from the open chest, beside which her master had fallen, and like a butterfly, fluttered down upon the heart that had ceased to beat several hours before.

Six months after the death of the Court apothecary, Melchior Ueberhell returned home and Frau Vorkel or, as she must now be called, Frau Schimmel, was the only person to whom he wrote to announce the hour of his arrival in Leipsic.

In his letter the young doctor begged her to undertake the responsibility of engaging a man servant and a kitchen maid for him, and of seeing that there was a fire

laid on his hearth to welcome him. He also asked "his faithful old friend" to nail up before the furnace of the laboratory on the first floor the brass triangle which the messenger, who brought the letter, would give to her. It was to be hung with the face, bearing the numerals and the figures of animals, towards the outside.

This news threw Frau Schimmel into a great state of excitement and at the appointed hour everything stood ready for the reception of the future occupants of the Ueberhell house.

Doctor Melchior and his family waited in Connewitz for the sun to set that he might enter his native town after it was dark and yet before the city gates were closed; for it was characteristic of his retiring nature to wish to avoid exposing himself and his beautiful wife and child to the vulgar curiosity of the people. These two had made the journey in a litter carried by mules.

As it was just the time for the Easter fair and many strangers were arriving in Leipsic the travellers passed through the Peterstrasse, across the market-place and entered their newly built house without attracting any attention.

It was too dark for them to see the statue of Minerva on the peak of the high gable and the sun-dial on its face with the circle of animals, but the lighted windows on the ground-floor and in the first story gave the house a hospitable air.

Frau Schimmel who had long been awaiting their arrival went out to meet them and the new man servant held the lantern so that they could see her curtseys.

"May the holy saints bless your homecoming!" the old lady called out, and Melchior felt himself choke at the host of sweet memories evoked by this greeting—of how his mother used to fold his hands and teach him to pray to the holy patrons

of the house, of the sad hour when he had received the news of his father's death—and to his astonishment he felt the warm tears running down his cheeks, the first he had shed for many years and almost before he knew it himself, he had caught Frau Schimmel to his heart and kissed her tenderly.

Then he turned to his slim young wife, who with the boy was standing behind him, and presented her to the old housekeeper: "The dearest treasure that I won in Italy! I commend her to your love."

Frau Schimmel raised the beautiful Italian's hand to her lips and lifted the little boy and hugged him. Melchior in the meanwhile hurried to the entrance door, there he bowed three times and solemnly lifted aloft his arms toward the evening-star that was just showing itself above the roof of a house across the market-place.

The old housekeeper noticed this, and rejoiced for she thought that Melchior was

returning thanks to the holy saints for a safe journey, but she was disillusioned when she heard him open his lips and cry towards heaven an invocation which was neither German nor Latin, for she knew the sound of the latter tongue, having heard it so often at mass, but a combination of strange sounding words more like those that she used to hear her late master muttering over his work in the laboratory, with his son's letter before him. It was certainly no Christian prayer and her heart sank within her. When the doctor had ended the ceremony which for all she knew might be an invocation of evil spirits, and entered the house with his wife and child, she went up to him and without a moment's indecision made the sign of the cross on his breast and another on the curly head of the child. Melchior laughed at her but did not rebuff her. Soon the travellers were seated about the neatly laid table in their own house

and Frau Schimmel had her reward in seeing Melchior enjoy the home-made dishes, and little Zeno—for that was the name of the Court apothecary's grandchild—drink the good milk and munch the butter cakes which she had baked to celebrate their arrival. But the young wife hardly tasted anything.

Did not the food please her? Perhaps she was accustomed in Italy to a different way of cooking? "Other nations, other customs."

But who could feel annoyed with that heavenly creature?

Frau Schimmel was of the opinion that she had never seen any one to equal her, and could not bear to take her eyes off her. Yet the appearance of the wife of her old favorite filled her with forebodings, and suddenly, though she was by no means superstitious or given to presentiments, she seemed to see Frau Bianca—so the young

Italian was called—lying on her bier, a light veil over her, and a wreath of lilies-of-the-valley on her raven hair. A sad quiet face!

Frau Schimmel's vision must have been caused by the young wife's excessive paleness. "White as snow, black as ebony" fitted her, as well the beauty of the fairy tale, only "red as blood" was wanting. She was also as tall and slender as the lilies in the little garden that the Court apothecary had owned outside the Petersthor.

After supper Frau Schimmel helped the mother to bathe the little Zeno and to put him to bed, and Melchior also assisted at the performance. As the old lady looked from mother to child a great pity filled her heart for the dear son of her late master who had staked his happiness on a creature so ethereal that the first wind might blow her away; such delicate perfection as that, if her experience did not deceive her, was

hardly adapted to the needs of an every-day German husband. But then did Melchior look like such an one? No.

Again she felt a cold shiver go down her back, for Melchior had taken the bath sheet and was holding it in front of him waiting to wrap the child in it as it was taken out of its tub, and it seemed to her as if he had on a shroud and his bloodless emaciated face with his black hair and moustache looked ghostly over the top of it.

It annoyed her that she should have these stupid, sad thoughts on the occasion of such a happy home coming!

She did her best to drive them away and the child helped her, for it, at least, looked lively enough as it sat in the warm water, and kicked, and splashed, and laughed, and cooed, calling to its parents and then to Frau Schimmel. When it tried to pronounce her name, her heart overflowed and she answered absently, for she was

saying a silent Paternoster for the health and welfare of this blessed child who somehow seemed even lovelier than Melchior had once been, though in his time she had considered him "the sweetest baby that had ever lived."

When the child was in bed the mother folded its hands and murmured what Frau Schimmel knew to be a prayer, but the father touched its forehead and the place about the heart with an essence, speaking at the same time some incomprehensible words. Whatever they meant, they seemed to agree well enough with the incomparable child.

The young wife was tired after her long journey and went early to bed, and when the housekeeper was finally left alone with Melchior, he begged her to tell him how things had gone with his father, after his departure.

The son of her late master had, then,

brought back from Italy his tender and affectionate heart, however stern and anxious his long and colourless face might seem; and when he heard of the old man's longing to see him, and death, his eyes were wet with tears.

He interrupted the course of her narrative but seldom; when she came to his father's last hours, however, and the success of the experiment which had been made on her with the elixir, he plied her with question upon question until he was satisfied as to what he wished to know. Then he suddenly stood still in the middle of the room and lifting his eyes and arms on high cried aloud, like one in an ecstasy: "Eternal Truth, holy Truth! Thy kingdom come!"

These words went through Frau Schimmel like a knife, and as Melchior stood there looking up at the ceiling as if he expected it to open and disclose to him a sight of

Heaven, he seemed so great, and unapproachable, and apart, that she feared him, though in years gone by she had tucked his luncheon into his knapsack before sending him off to school, and tremblingly she yielded to his will as she had done before to his father's and swore again a solemn oath never to reveal what she might see or hear concerning the elixir.

This vow oppressed Frau Schimmel and she breathed more freely when he began to talk about things within the range of her comprehension, about the details of the housekeeping, and the laboratory on the second floor with the big furnace. He must find an assistant who would be silent and discreet and Frau Schimmel knew of one whom she could recommend, for her husband did not enjoy his newly acquired leisure; he had been so used to blowing a furnace and decocting medicines that he could not give up the

occupation and consequently she could not roast so much as a pigeon without having his grim and blear-eyed visage peering over her shoulder.

The sensible woman foresaw that idleness would soon render the old bridegroom discontented, and Doctor Melchior, who remembered the silent man and his skilful hands, was very easily persuaded to give him a trial. At the back of the house there was a cheerful suite of rooms where the housekeeper and the apprentices had formerly lived. Melchior now put this apartment at the disposition of the old couple. Frau Schimmel would lend her aid to his wife, for Frau Bianca understood neither German nor the management of a German household, while from Herr Schimmel he anticipated the best particularly as he—the doctor—meant to devote himself at first entirely to the discovery of a remedy for his wife, whose condition filled him with the deepest apprehension.

The new laboratory was presently the scene of the most zealous labours, and Herr Schimmel was delighted with his new position, for no apothecary and chemist had ever before had such a well-fitted furnace and such delicate scales and instruments to work with; and if he did not understand what was the end of so much weighing and fusing and distilling, or what the remedies were that the doctor was always decanting from the boiling liquids, yet the occupation made the long summer days pass most pleasantly, for he had none of that love of the open air that most Leipzigers bring into the world with them.

Since his apprenticeship, and a whole lifetime had passed since then, he had left the apothecary shop only twice a year to take a holiday, and on none of these occasions had he ever seen green trees, for his "outings" as he called them, fell, according to his own wish, on the festival of the

"Three Kings" in January, and on the twenty-seventh of March which was his saint's day, his name being Rupert.

Of the eighty holidays that lay behind him—all of which he had spent in going to see a sister who was married to a miller and lived in Gohlis—nine and thirty times it had rained, and forty-one times it had snowed. In consequence of this "a walk in the fresh air" always suggested to his mind, damp clothes, wet feet, ruined shoes, a cold in the head, and an attack of indigestion—the result of his sister's greasy cooking. His wife, too, preferred the inside of the city walls, "where" as she was so fond of saying, "you know where you are."

Thus even in summer Herr Schimmel was always on hand to help the doctor, nor had he cause to complain of being overworked, for the master seemed as fond of a walk in the open air as the assistant was averse to one, and when May came and

the fruit trees were in blossom, when the delicate green leaves of the beeches burst from the bud, and the oaks shed their dry brown foliage in order to deck themselves out in young green, and the dandelions embroidered the fields with gold and then sprinkled them over with silver tissue, when the cowslips and daisies and violets and their spring companions in purple and yellow appeared, and the larches on the banks of the Pleisse turned green, when the nightingale sang and rejoiced in the woods, then Doctor Melchior Ueberhell rarely spent a sunny afternoon at home.

With his beautiful young wife on his arm he wandered through the lovely Laubwald—that precious possession of the city—and though he had often said while in Italy, where it is dryer and the foliage sparser than in Germany, that there was nothing so beautiful as the abounding brooks and the dense greenery of his native

forests, it gave him sincere joy, that spring, to have his opinion confirmed and to see that his dearly loved wife cared as much for the German woods as he did.

When in their walks they encountered other burghers, all eyes rested on the handsome pair, for if Melchior were thin, his figure was tall and his features good, and there was a strange charm in his big, dark, eyes that seemed to find more in the woods than was visible to others, moreover the black clothes of his profession sat as well upon him as did his wife's white dresses and kerchiefs of costly stuffs upon her. These she was fond of relieving by a bit of light blue, her favourite colour. The slim young Italian, with her bowed head and beautiful pale face framed in its black hair, seemed like an elf who had gone out in her light dress to dance the May dance in the moonlight and had decked herself with forget-me-not and gentian.

Whoever saw her felt glad, for it seemed to him as if he had met with a piece of good fortune, but no one sought to make her acquaintance, although the doctor had not omitted to take her, soon after their arrival, to call upon his relatives and the dignitaries of the city. People had asked them at first to dine, but as Melchior always refused because of his wife's delicate health, they did not press the matter; for no one could talk with her as she understood no German, while all who heard her light cough felt that the doctor was right to guard his fragile treasure so carefully.

When the few matrons who visited her called upon her, instead of finding her in the kitchen or the cellar, they found her lying upon the sofa with a book or her guitar in her hands, or perhaps playing with her little boy, and the amiable ones among them explained it by her pale face and delicate air, but the severer ones said

that such idleness was the Italian custom and they pitied the doctor.

What the feminine relatives of the doctor chiefly resented was the fact that the young couple seemed to get on so perfectly well without them. Happiness indeed shone in their eyes, and the silent doctor seemed to find his tongue when he walked in the woods and fields with his beloved wife. The notary Anselmus Winckler was also loud in his praises of both of them. He was the only person who ever joined them in their walks through the woods, and as he had been for several years Melchior's companion at school in Bologna, and had there learned to speak the sweet Italian tongue, he could talk with Frau Bianca like one of her own countrymen. He was a convivial person, and when he was in the tavern, or dining with a friend, he would expatiate on how learned the doctor was in all the secrets of nature and how well Dr.

Vitali, Frau Bianca's father, had known how to cultivate her appreciation of the good and the beautiful. To hear her questions and her husband's tender and wise replies was a pleasure unspeakable.

If the weather were fine the doctor would sometimes go out in the mornings also, and then he liked best to take his young wife to the Ueberhell garden outside the Petersthor, and show her what rare herbs and fruit-trees his father and grandfather had planted, and Frau Bianca amused herself by gathering the flowers, or helping her child to pick the ripe cherries and early pears.

In Bologna she had found it difficult to entice her husband away from his work, indeed her own father, his master, had held him back, and now she rejoiced that in the new home he was willing to give her so many hours of his time, moreover—he had confessed it to her—instead of the elixir, which she had been taught from childhood

to regard as the worthiest object of research, he was seeking for a medicine that should cure her.

Autumn came, and the starlings assembled on the Thomaskirche, the storks in the village, and the swallows on the roof of the neighbour's house to prepare for their flight towards the south; heavy storms tore the leaves from the trees, one dull rainy day followed another, and when at last the mountain-ash berries and the barberries were shining in all their brightest scarlet, the rosy flush that had been coaxed into the young wife's cheeks during the long, dry, happy summer changed to a crimson spot, her eyes acquired a strained, longing, mournful expression, and after she had had an attack of coughing she would sink together as if the autumn winds had broken her as they had the stems of the mallow which were hanging from the trellis in the little garden outside.

Then a day came when the Court physician Olearius found his way into "The Three Kings." It was in the middle of December and straw was strewn in the street in front of the Ueberhell house. Those who had held aloof from the young couple in their happy hours now drew near in their misfortune. It seemed as if the young Italian had suddenly become the idol of the inhabitants of Leipsic, so many were the inquiries about her condition, so numerous the friendly offers of service, the kindly gifts of hot-house flowers and rare wines. Just as the Christmas bells rang out along the streets of the city the joyful tidings "Christ is born" a sharp cry rang through the rooms of The Three Holy Kings and Melchior knelt beside his blighted flower that now was whiter even than the lily, for the last shimmer of red had faded forever from her wan cheeks, and he wrung his hands in utter despair.

The funeral train that followed the young Italian, who had appeared among them like a fleeting vision of Paradise, would have done honour to the wife of the Chief Justice.

Every one who was respectable and aristocratic in Leipsic followed her, as well as many humbler folk on whom Bianca's glance had rested but once. People were now so open-hearted, and seemed to wish to give to the dead what they had withheld from the living. Hot tears were shed, for though not one of all the mourners had ever really known Bianca, they felt that they had lost something beautiful.

The only member of the family of Ueberhell who did not make part of the funeral train was the chief mourner, the bereaved Doctor Melchior himself.

Alone and tearless he paced the chamber that Bianca had occupied. He denied himself to all who wished to see him or to

comfort him, he even refused to admit the notary Winckler.

That the flower of his life was crushed, and that he carried a death-wound in his heart was all that he felt or thought.

Frau Schimmel began at last to fear that he too would die. If the vision that showed her Frau Bianca on her death-bed had come true, why should not the other one concerning the doctor? He ate and drank less than a Carthusian on a fast-day, he offended all the good people who had shown his wife such honour, he went neither to mass nor to his work in the laboratory, and consequently her husband, too, was idle and threatened to become unbearable once more.

How would it all end?

The burghers exhibited great indulgence towards him. He had received a terrible blow, and one must forgive him for not having followed the coffin, particularly,

as nothing else was wanting that was necessary to an imposing and expensive funeral: Frau Schimmel had taken care of that, having arranged it on her own responsibility. When the great healer, Time, had comforted him, then would he draw near to them again, most of his friends thought, yes even nearer than before, now that he had lost his invalid wife who had hindered him from joining their gay circles.

We are so willing to be lenient to the unfortunate, for a Greater than we has visited them with sorrow such as man could not inflict.

But it ended otherwise than his friends anticipated. The Three Kings lay there like a deserted house, and although the tall chimney on the roof began to belch forth streams of smoke by night, as well as by day, hardly four weeks after the death of Bianca, it was commonly supposed that the place was unoccupied. Commonly sup-

posed: for once in a while the knocker was heard when Herr Winckler called, happy childish laughter floated out from the open window, or Frau Schimmel was seen with her basket on her arm going to market.

But no one ever met the doctor, neither at mass nor in the street, and yet he did not always remain at home.

In summer at sunrise he went to the churchyard, and from there into the woods; in winter, when the first stars appeared, he wrapped himself in his black cloak and went to Bianca's grave, and thence to one of the neighbouring villages, but he never entered anywhere, and only the sexton who admitted him to the graveyard, and the gate watchman, who opened the burgher's wicket to him, ever exchanged greetings with him.

At home he wandered around no longer, idle and fasting, but ate his meals regularly, and threw himself into his work with such

passionate energy, that even the industrious Schimmel found it too much, and Frau Schimmel grew anxious. The latter, too, knew what the doctor hoped to accomplish by his hard work, for she had spied upon him, but she must not be blamed as it had been with the most praiseworthy intention.

Four weeks after Bianca's death, and after he had shed many hot and heart-felt tears, Melchior turned for the first time to his work again.

It happened late in the evening, and before he went into the laboratory he uttered such strange words over the sleeping child that Frau Schimmel, who was watching beside it, was frightened, especially as Schimmel had not been called to aid the doctor, and what might happen to the distraught man, if he were left to work alone, passed in gloomy visions before the old lady. So she concealed herself behind the bellows that were attached to the furnace, and there

she was witness of events that sent cold shivers down her back whenever she thought of them.

In his best holiday costume of black velvet puffed with silk he entered the laboratory, holding himself very erect. The high, arched room was only dimly lighted by a hanging-lamp, but when Frau Schimmel heard his steps she shrank together till, as she fancied, she must have become smaller and less easily discoverable. What she feared was that he might start the furnace and she should be obliged to reveal herself because of the heat.

But to her great relief he walked straight into the middle of the laboratory and stopped directly under the lamp, which was suspended from the point where the ribs of the vaulting intersected. There he waved a fresh laurel branch towards every side of the room and called out the same words and names that he had murmured by

the bed-side of his son, only louder and more imperiously.

To the listener it was perfectly clear that this was an invocation of spirits, and her knees trembled under her, and her teeth chattered so audibly that she feared he must hear her. Though she closed her eyes tightly in order not to see the hellish brood that was about to pervade that Christian house, fearing that she might be strangled by them or go mad; yet the unholy creatures must have entered the laboratory obedient to their master's call for she distinctly heard him greet one of them solemnly.

As she did not smell any sulphur fumes nor see any dancing flames when she peeped out from under her half-closed lids, she gathered sufficient courage to look about her. But she saw nothing save the doctor on his knees talking into the corner of the laboratory, where there was nothing

but the broom with which she had swept the stone floor that morning, and the shabby old brown peruke that Herr Schimmel was in the habit of putting on in the winter when he crossed the court-yard.

These apparitions she knew so intimately that she began to be reassured, and her confidence once restored she reflected that either the spirits must have held her unworthy of a sight of them and have been visible only to the master, or else that the doctor had gone completely out of his mind. Of her own sanity she had no doubts for her mind was made of sterner stuff and would therefore be less easily affected.

Whether Doctor Melchior were holding converse with the broom, or the peruke, or a spectre whom he, and no one else could see Frau Schimmel could not tell, but she had then recovered herself sufficiently to be able to listen attentively.

She crossed herself several times for the sake of greater safety, and what she heard from the doctor's own mouth remained a secret between her and Schimmel.

Not a word did she lose till Melchior went into the library next the laboratory, and then she thought it expedient to leave her hiding-place and hurry to her room.

Schimmel had long been in bed, and his snoring greeted her as she entered, but she wakened him to tell him breathlessly what she had just seen and heard.

After she had explained her anxiety about the doctor and its consequences, she continued that the apparition which the doctor had invoked was the Spirit of Truth.

Whether it had been obedient to the call she could not say, but, at any rate it had been no demon of hell—God be praised—bringing a reek of the pit, and besides Satan was the Prince of Lies and would consider himself insulted if he were

called the Spirit of Truth, moreover the spirit who had appeared to the doctor had behaved in the most exemplary manner.

The master, too, had confessed with true Christian humility and self reproach that he had sinned against the Spirit of Truth, to whom none the less he had dedicated his body and soul, inasmuch as, influenced by his great love for his wife, he had devoted himself to finding a remedy which would cure her, and had thus become a traitor to the object of his life.

After this he had sprung up and held aloft his hand with the forefinger extended and sworn to the spirit that nothing hereafter should seduce him from the pursuit of the elixir which was to render Truth triumphant in the world.

Frau Schimmel described how the doctor's eyes had glowed at these words, and how he had looked as if an invisible hand had written "Truth" in large letters upon

his forehead. He would be as certain to reach his goal as she would be to pray the holy saints for a peaceful death.

After a long silence and much consideration the only thing that Herr Schimmel found to say in answer to these important revelations was: "It is all the same to me," to which his dear wife, with like brevity, and sincere disgust replied: "You fool!"

The next morning the doctor began work afresh and with redoubled zeal.

Every drug that had been reserved from the laboratory of the late Court apothecary was brought, mixed with the elixir and fused; and he tried each new mixture on himself, for Frau Schimmel was not to be persuaded to smell any more elixirs.

She, however, was more studious than ever of the necessities of the household, and of the material comfort of the doctor and his child, and when she noticed that her master began to cough as his dead wife had done,

she entreated him to take better care of himself, and not to leave his son an orphan: she also instigated Herr Winckler to beg him to consider his own welfare and that of the child.

There was yet another thing that made her unhappy.

Her whole heart was wrapped up in little Zeno, and when he was dressed in his best on feast-days a prettier and nobler looking child than he was not to be seen.

But the doctor did not seem to have much affection for him; yet in the evenings when the little one was in bed he went through the same performance that had been customary during the lifetime of its mother, and once in a while he would lift the child out of the cradle and press it to his heart so passionately that the boy, in a fright would struggle to get away from him and would cry for Frau Schimmel.

Finally the child became so afraid of its

father that it would not go near him and this the old housekeeper could bear no longer, so she took her courage in her hands and spoke to her master about it.

She began by saying she had not forgotten that, according to his dead father the saints had endowed her with a very limited intelligence, but that she knew enough to be certain that it could be neither wise, nor right for a man who had been blessed with such a fine son, to be indifferent to his treasure and indeed to estrange it.

The extraordinary man looked at her with his sad eyes and answered thoughtfully: "I demand nothing from the boy because I have no other idea than to give him all I have and am. For his benefit I am seeking something higher than the world has yet known, and I shall find it."

The lofty words silenced Frau Schimmel, but she thought to herself: "With my few

brains I am yet wiser than you. A heart-felt, willing kiss from your child would make you happier than all the learning that you make so much fuss about, and a caress or a spank from you — each at the proper time — would do little Zeno more good than all the world-improving discoveries in search of which you embitter your days and nights."

One beautiful afternoon in June on her return from the graveyard, whither she regularly took the boy, and where she herself carefully tended the white roses on Bianca's grave, she found the doctor stretched on the sofa, instead of being in the laboratory as usual, and as he sighed heavily when she entered, she asked him respectfully what it was that oppressed him.

At first he shook his head as if he wished to be left alone, but when she, in spite of this, remained and he noticed that

her gray eyes were full of tears, he suddenly remembered that by the side of his mother's coffin, and more recently at Bianca's death-bed they had wept together, then his full heart overflowed, and gasping and shaken by his cough he burst forth with: "It will soon be over — I feel it within me, and yet I am no nearer to the goal. All the elements of nature I have called to my aid — all the spirits 'twixt Heaven and Earth over whom necromancy has any power have I made subject to my will and have commanded them to help me — to what end? There stands the elixir and is hardly more valuable than the small beer with which the servant down-stairs quenches his thirst, indeed it is less useful for who derives any benefit from it? I shall quit this world an unhappy man who has wasted his life and talents in untold efforts from his school-days until now — and yet, if the spirit would only reveal to

me the missing substance which should give to this liquid in my hand the power that it once possessed, gladly would I sacrifice twenty lives! Oh! you faithful old soul, you can never understand it, I know. But this world, where lying and deceit flourish, would be changed into a Paradise, and it would be an Ueberhell whom mankind would have to thank for the great blessing. And now — now!"

Here he buried his face in his hands like one in despair. Frau Schimmel regarded the sorrowful man with deep sympathy, and as it was in her nature to try and comfort those who wept rather than to join in their lamentations, she cast about her for something that would console him.

She had not far to seek, for there in the bay-window was perched little Zeno, carefully picking the green leaves off a rose bough that he had been told to gather from his mother's grave to take home to his

father. The whole stem was now bare but the white blossom at the end was untouched, and still beautiful.

She beckoned to the boy, and in a low voice bade him rouse his father and give him the rose from the churchyard; little Zeno obeyed and walked straight towards Melchior; opposite the sofa his courage failed him for a moment, but he took heart again and laying his little hand on the prematurely gray hair of the disheartened sage said, with all the sweet charm peculiar to a child when it speaks to comfort one who is its natural guardian and support: "Father, little Zeno brings you a rose. It comes from the churchyard. Mamma sent it to you with her love."

The doctor, deeply touched, sat up suddenly, grasped the child's hand that held out the rose to him and tried to draw the boy towards him in order to embrace him.

But Zeno, instead of answering the lov-

ing words addressed to him, struggled and cried out sharply, for the strong pressure of his father's hand had driven a big thorn into his finger, and the blood from the wound was running down onto his light blue dress.

The doctor was distracted. He had hurt the one creature for whose future greatness he had sacrificed his waning strength.

There flowed the blood of his son who had come as messenger from his wife! On her he had lavished the one great love of his life and the white rose that she had sent him lay at his feet!

As his gaze fell upon the flower that she had loved better than all others, and then rested upon the crying child, a great tenderness filled his soul and for the first time he felt deep remorse that he had not dedicated his whole life to his love. To devote the remainder of his time on earth,

which he felt would be but short, to the child who stood there crying, seemed to him at that moment his holiest duty; yet the passion of the investigator within him could not be subdued, for as he looked about in search of a cloth to stanch the blood that flowed from the boy's finger his eyes fell upon the bottle of elixir on the table, and then on the rose at his feet and the thought flashed across him that Bianca who had sent him the rose might have indicated to him by the hand of their offspring the substance which he needed to achieve the object of his life.

Of every element found in water or in air, in the earth or fire, he had added a portion to the elixir, save only the blood of a child.

Breathless he caught the hand of his son and held it over the phial, speaking coaxingly to him while drop after drop of the red life blood trickled into the elixir.

Then he put the child in Frau Schimmel's arms and hurried into the laboratory as fast as his tired feet could carry him. There he blew the bellows so violently that the housekeeper looked at him with silent indignation. When all was prepared he poured the liquid into a crucible, set it among the glowing and sparkling coals and murmured strange words and spells over the seething fluid until it boiled up and the hissing bubbles ran over the rim of the crucible. Then he stood the hot vessel in cold water, pronounced one more incantation over it, held it before a mirror — the symbol of the Spirit of Truth and the emblem which she is always represented as carrying in her right hand — and poured the liquid back into the phial. Beads of perspiration stood on his forehead, his eyes gleamed with excitement, and he breathed heavily as he approached his son to try the power of the new elixir on him.

But something most unexpected happened: Frau Schimmel, usually so timid, pressed the boy's face against her breast and, her good gray eyes flashing with her angry determination to resist, cried out: "Do with your elixir what you will, only leave me the child in peace! Little Zeno speaks the truth without any of your mixtures. A child's mind is a holy thing, so his mother who is now an angel would tell you, and I — I will not permit you to misuse it, in order to try your arts upon it!"

And stranger yet! The doctor accepted this rebuff and did not even reprove the old lady for her disrespectful opposition, he only answered with calm certainty: "Neither the child nor any one else is needed to make the experiment."

He inhaled the contents of the phial himself, in long breaths, staring for some time thoughtfully at the floor and then at the arches of the ceiling. His chest rose

and fell heavily, and he wiped the perspiration now and then from his damp brow.

Frau Schimmel watched him anxiously, and she could not say whether he looked more like a madman or a saint as he finally lifted his arms towards heaven and cried: "I have found it, Father, Bianca! — I have found it!"

Frau Schimmel left him alone and put the child to bed. When she returned to the laboratory and found the doctor in the same place where she had left him, she said modestly: "Here I am and if it pleases the Herr Doctor to try the elixir on so humble a person as myself, I am at his service. Only one favour would I ask: would the Herr Doctor be so kind as not to ask questions about Schimmel and myself or any member of the honoured Ueberhell family."

But the doctor hesitated awhile before accepting this offer, for he had not forgotten the defiant words with which she

had withheld his child from him only a short time before, and moreover the trial which he had made on himself had assured him of the success of his discovery; having inhaled the essence it had seemed to him as if the burden of oppression had been suddenly lifted from his mind. And when he turned to the introspection of himself, and questioned his own heart, he found so many spots and defects on what he had hitherto considered faultless, that he was confirmed in the belief that he had seen the true reflection of his own personality for the first time.

Yes, he might well be certain of his success!

And yet the joy of the discovery was clouded. How often had he dreamed of the manifold effects that would be produced by the elixir! At such moments the hope had sprung up within him that it would possess the power to enlighten him con-

cerning his own nature and existence; would enable him to pierce the veil that hides the mystery of the future from mortal eyes; that it would reveal to the mind of man the true nature of things, and solve the problem of life.

Yet all the questions directed to that end, which he asked himself, remained unanswered, and for this reason he was desirous of seeing whether the essence might not perhaps enable others to grasp the real nature of that which until then had been unfathomable by man.

Consequently he could not resist the temptation of letting Frau Schimmel inhale the elixir. Then he asked her why every one who was born was destined to die, and disappear?

To which she only answered: "Such things you must ask of the good God, who has so willed it."

When he wished further to know how,

and of what ingredients the human blood was made, the old lady laughed, and replied lightly that it was red, and more than that she had not learned from the "Schoolmaster with the Children," from which she had acquired all that she knew.

Then the doctor cried: "And so my hard-earned discovery is of less value than I hoped!"

But these words had scarcely escaped him before he smiled to himself, for it was the elixir that had forced him to this outbreak, otherwise he would never have confessed to any one, be he who he might, that his wonderful discovery was in any way incomplete.

Being satisfied with his experiences for that day he no longer hindered the old lady from going to rest.

On his own bed he lay and pondered over the limitations of his discovery.

To reveal the truth, wholly and abso-

lutely, was not within the power of the elixir, nor unfortunately did it possess the efficacy to lead one to a perfect knowledge of oneself; on the other hand it was capable of forcing any one who used it to be absolutely honest in his dealings with his neighbours, and that surely was no small gain. Indeed it was enough to place him among the most famous discoverers in all ages, and to inscribe his name beside those of the noblest benefactors of man in the whole round world.

Sleepless, yet filled with triumphant joy, like a general who has won a glorious victory, he watched through the night. When Frau Schimmel came to the house on the following morning she found him with the little Zeno between his knees.

Her suspicion was immediately aroused that the father had misused the child in order to try the effect of the elixir upon it, and she stood at the door and listened.

But the little bottle tightly corked peered from the doctor's breast-pocket and, instead of questioning Zeno, he was talking to him earnestly:

"Your mother," he was saying, "was more precious to me than life or aught else, and you, my little one, are dear to me, too, chiefly because it was she who gave you to me, but who knows if I might not have sacrificed you if the success of the work, to which I have devoted so many years, had depended upon it. Now I have reached the goal, and I tell you, my boy, there are only two joys here below so great as to give a foretaste of the bliss that awaits us in Paradise: one is the sweet rapture of true love, and the other, the transport of the inventor when his experiment is successful. I have known both."

During this speech, which the doctor had made under the influence of the elixir, the boy stared at his father with open mouth,

undecided whether to be afraid, or to consider it all a jest and laugh.

Frau Schimmel made an end of his doubt, for she could not bring herself to stand by patiently and have the child confused by such extraordinary sentiments. She interrupted the doctor: "Little Zeno finds his pleasure in very different ways, don't you, my lamb? You would rather have your father send you to market with Frau Schimmel who buys cherries for you, wouldn't you? Cherries are better for children than 'true love,' and all the other nonsense that men worry themselves about."

The doctor only laughed and said: "One day he will learn for himself what his father meant, and if you wish to buy him cherries, you good old soul, take him along with you and pick out the finest. You might also go to the Nuremberg shop and let him choose the most beautiful horse,

and whatever else among the toys that he wishes for, no matter how expensive it may be; for I owe it in part to my boy that I have attained my object, and I must hurt him a bit more. But don't be afraid! He will hardly feel it."

What did that remarkable man have in mind? Certainly, no good!

As Frau Schimmel felt that she stood in the place of a mother to her darling, she demanded respectfully what the doctor meant to do to the child.

He answered in some embarrassment, and without looking at the old lady; "It is because I have need of a larger quantity of the elixir. If I were to bleed another child — and bleeding is good for every one, big or little — they would accuse me of practising the black arts and perhaps, after their fashion of making a mountain out of a mole-hill, would denounce me as an infanticide. Therefore the boy must spare a few more

drops of his blood, and he will do so gladly if he receives something pretty as a reward. I am very skilful and can draw the blood without hurting him."

When, however, Frau Schimmel clasped her hands, and Zeno, whimpering, hid his face in her skirts, the doctor hastened to add: "There, there, I am not going to do it at once, and perhaps it is just as well that I should experiment with my own blood first. So take the boy out and buy him the finest plaything you can find, and leave a message at Herr Winckler's; he is to come to-day to The Three Kings, for I have something very important to communicate to him."

The old lady was very glad to get the child beyond the reach of his father. His happiness was as incomprehensible to her, as his design on the blood of his child was dreadful, and she led the boy forth quickly. The doctor, however, went into the labora-

tory with wavering steps, and in the next half hour prepared more of the elixir into which he mixed some of his own blood.

The effect was the same as if he had used the blood of his child.

This delighted him so much that he fairly beamed with pleasure. But even then he gave himself no rest. He took the elixir which he had made the day before into the library, and there he wrote and wrote.

At noon he allowed a morsel of food to be brought to him, and ate it seated at his desk. When he had finished he continued his work with his pen, sealing-wax and seal, until the notary, Herr Winckler, called towards evening.

For the first time in the course of their long friendship he fell on the notary's neck, and told him with wet eyes, and broken voice that he had reached the happiest hour of his life, for the great work to which he had already dedicated himself while yet in

Padua and Bologna, was completed, and that only the preceding evening he had achieved the most marvellous discovery of all times.

One of whose effects would be that a new epoch would dawn for the profession to which Herr Winckler belonged—that of the law.

Here his friend interrupted him to inquire what this discovery might be, but Melchior had the force to keep his secret, and only handed over to him the phial of the elixir, which he had previously packed carefully in a jewel casket of Bianca's, of Italian workmanship, and then wrapped in parchment, and tied, and fastened, with many seals.

He also entrusted his school companion with the letters which he had written, saying that his days were numbered, and giving him many instructions. Finally he made the notary swear to be a faithful

guardian and second father to Zeno if he should be taken away.

At midnight the friends parted, deeply moved, and Herr Winckler told his wife that he had never seen any man, let alone the solemn Melchior, so bubbling over and beaming with happiness, and if one could judge by the radiance of his glance, and the fire of his youthful enthusiasm, his friend had many more good years to live.

But what had pleased him in the appearance of the doctor was, alas! only the expiring flicker of the burnt-out candle.

The intense excitement of the last few days had exhausted the sick man, and before dawn Frau Schimmel was roused by his bell. When she entered his room she found him sitting up in bed with burning cheeks and coughing violently. He called for something to drink, saying that he was dying of thirst.

When he was refreshed by a glass of

wine mixed with water, which in Italy had grown to be his favourite drink, he said to the old housekeeper that he would not need to use his son's blood, as his own was equally efficacious. He also asked her if perchance his father had wounded his hand before he had discovered the elixir, and when Frau Schimmel stated that he had, for she remembered the broken glass retort which had cut the Court apothecary's finger the day before his death, he smiled and said: "Now the wonderful fact of his discovery is explained. A drop of the paternal blood must have found its way into the mixture. Thus one riddle after another is solved, and soon the last mystery that remains will become clear to me."

Then he added that having brought Truth into the world he was glad to depart to that region where it was always day, where there were no deceits and no uncertainties, and where the star of his life

that had set would arise for him once more.

He murmured Bianca's name and closed his eyes, while a happy smile lit up his worn, thin face. His breast rose and fell with his irregular breathing, shaken now and then by his cough and feverish shivering, and often he cried out like one inspired: "Infinite labour, measureless reward! All, all fulfilled!"

Frau Schimmel realised that the end had come. After he had received the sacrament, the old lady laid his hand upon the curly head of his son. Melchior gazed fondly into the sweet face of his child, and quietly closed his eyes.

The priest who administered extreme unction to him was fond of telling the story of this last sacrament, for he had never seen any dying man exhibit greater confidence and faith.

Frau Schimmel cried herself nearly blind.

On the third day after the death of Doctor Melchior Ueberhell, his mortal remains were carried to rest with great ceremony, and buried in the place that he himself had chosen during his lifetime.

Between his wife and his mother, rose the little mound that marked his resting-place, and later many who visited the churchyard used to stop beside the graves of Bianca and Melchior, perhaps because of the creeping roses which had been planted beneath the cross of his beloved, and which spread so luxuriantly that they soon covered the husband's grave as well as the wife's, and in the month of June decked them both with a wondrous wealth of blossom.

In the letter which the doctor handed to Herr Winckler, the guardian of his son, shortly before his death, he desired the notary, or his successor, to give to his son Zeno, on the morning of his twenty-fifth birthday, the sealed package containing the

phial, together with the accompanying manuscript.

In a second letter on which was written: "To be opened in case my son Zeno should die before reaching his twenty-fifth birthday," he informed the notary of the power that dwelt within the phial, and charged him to employ it for the benefit of mankind.

Both letters—the one to Zeno and the other to the notary — contained precise directions for the making of the elixir, and also the recommendation that it should be sent to all universities and faculties, as well as to the spiritual and temporal authorities of his beloved fatherlands, Saxony and Germany, that it might become the common property of the whole world.

To Frau Schimmel the doctor entrusted the worldly welfare of little Zeno, and to the notary the responsibility of his education, and both of these people not only fulfilled their duties, but gave the child a

large share of their love, so that the orphan throve both in mind and body.

That he was neither wiser nor duller, stronger nor weaker than his school companions pleased Frau Schimmel, for as she loved to say: "Those people over whom one exclaims when one meets them, either because of their exceptional goodness or badness, are destined to be unhappy in this world."

The old lady also took great pleasure in dressing the boy very finely, and as he would one day be rich, she had no fear for his future, save that on his twenty-fifth birthday he was to receive his father's elixir, concerning which, loyal to her oath, she maintained silence towards everyone.

But even this anxiety was, she thought, to be removed when one day there was an alarm of fire, and she learned that a conflagration had broken out in the oil cellar of the Winckler house, and that the notary's

quarters had been entirely destroyed by the flames.

But she rejoiced too soon, for only Doctor Melchior's letters to his son and to the notary were burned, and the strange old lady could hardly bring herself to forgive the brave and conscientious guardian of her favourite, because at great personal risk he had saved the casket containing the phial.

Of Zeno there is very little to tell, except that from a child he grew to be a fine youth, with the great dark eyes of his mother, and that he cared much about his elegant clothes, and was devoted to his noble horse.

In his twenty-third year he became a doctor of ancient and modern jurisprudence, in his twenty-fourth he gained admission to the famous Leipsic "Schöppen" court of justice, and now the venerable Frau Schimmel as well as his guardian, the notary, whose housekeeper had died in the mean-

while, were strongly urging him to choose a helpmate for life.

As the wishes of his guardians coincided with his own in this particular, he hastened to fulfil them, and his choice fell upon the daughter of an officer of high rank, who had been noticeable at the Rathhaus balls on account of the elegance of her costume.

Frau Schimmel was apprehensive, for according to her ideas, an honourable young woman of good burgher family was better suited to the heir of The Three Kings; yet in reality she considered nothing too good or too beautiful for Zeno, and after she had learned from the officer's servants that their mistress was of a cheerful disposition, and was able with her own skilful hands to dress herself well on very small means, and to keep up an appearance of elegance in her father's house which swarmed with children, she came to the conclusion that Zeno's choice was a wise one.

She therefore gave her consent to his wooing, and at the end of three months the wedding took place with great magnificence, to the sound of drums and trumpets.

The young husband went about as if he were borne on wings.

Surely there was no bride in all Saxony so lovely and so beautiful, and when she refused flatly to have Frau Schimmel invited to the wedding feast, he excused her, thinking that her refusal was the result of her aristocratic surroundings and training. The question did not give rise to any open quarrel, for Frau Schimmel of her own accord announced that it was enough for her to pray for the happiness of the young couple in church.

For four weeks after the wedding-day, Zeno continued to wonder that such exquisite bliss could fall to the lot of any mortal in this world, which so many people regarded as a vale of sorrow, and when his

passionate dark eyes were reflected in the cooler blue ones of his wife, and she returned his caresses sweetly but without laying aside her distinctive and reserved manner, which he laid to the account of maidenly bashfulness, he felt that no one could be more blessed, and that he was the most enviable of men. So the time passed, and his twenty-fifth birthday was approaching. The young Frau Ueberhell awaited with even greater curiosity than her husband, the disclosure of the contents of the sealed package which Herr Winckler had in charge for his ward.

On the morning of the birthday Frau Rosalie dismissed the housekeeper, whom she kept at a distance, and herself admitted the notary when she saw him approach The Three Kings, which by her wish had been richly decorated with stucco and gilding, and furnished with stable room for Zeno's horse and her two ponies.

The old gentleman brought with him the parcel, as the young couple expected and after saying that unfortunately the written instructions, which Doctor Melchior had given him at the same time with the box, had fallen a victim to the flames, he broke the seals that had fastened the package for so many years, and Rosalie clapped her hands when the beautiful casket of carved ivory mounted in gold came to view.

It was opened with great care, and Zeno took from it a paper which lay on a rose-coloured silk pad and on which Doctor Melchior had written in large Roman characters: "To my son Zeno Ueberhell. To be used according to the directions found in the letter accompanying the casket, afterwards to be given to his eldest son on his twenty-fifth birthday, and thus always to be handed down from first-born to first-born, to the last one, which, please Heaven, will be to the end of Time, in order

that the phial, destined to change the aspect of human life, and lead it to its true salvation, may remain forever a priceless heirloom in the Ueberhell family. By means of the accompanying prescription every experienced chemist will be able to make the elixir in any desired quantity. My blessing rest upon you, my son, and upon every Ueberhell who, on his twenty-fifth birthday—that is having reached maturity—shall receive this little bottle and regard it as the most precious of all his possessions."

This inscription Melchior's son read with trembling voice, and he was so deeply moved by the solemnity of his father's words that he did not perceive his young wife lift the cushion from the casket, examine the phial with curiosity, and then, having removed the glass stopper with difficulty, hold the bottle to her dainty little nose.

But she closed the phial as quickly as she had opened it, for she experienced so strange a sensation, her blood beat through her veins so oddly, that, impelled by some inner force, and regardless of the presence of Herr Winckler, and the tact which she usually displayed, she cried out: "So that, then, is your inheritance! A bit of coloured glass which one could buy in the street for a trifle, and a few brown drops of some stuff which no one knows the use of, now that the directions are burned."

As Zeno, surprised at these shrill notes which he now heard for the first time, in his wife's voice, tried to pacify her, saying that no doubt the liquid possessed marvellous properties, and that they could not blame his sainted father because an unlucky accident had destroyed his elucidation of them, and sought to draw her to him, she pushed him away roughly, and

answered with angry scorn: "Sainted, you call the old man! As if I didn't know that he was a master of all sorts of hellish arts and black magic! A fig for such saintship!"

They were bitter words, and, like one who has been wandering in sunshine and suddenly finds himself overwhelmed by blackest night, Zeno felt himself deprived of strength, the floor seemed to rise, and his knees trembled.

He grasped the phial, hoping to recover himself by aid of the pungent odour that escaped from it, and even as he inhaled the contents, light seemed once more to flood the darkness, and very erect, and with a dignity of which he had not hitherto thought himself capable, he listened to Rosalie's further words.

He grew very pale, and it was with difficulty that he restrained himself, but he did not interrupt her as, forced by the power of

the elixir, she went on to declare, that she had accepted his offer of marriage merely because he was sufficiently presentable, notwithstanding his humble origin, to enable her to walk or ride with him about the city without feeling humiliated; that she had hoped and expected to find great wealth by means of which as his wife, she could lead the life that she enjoyed, and be able also to help her father to bring up her younger brothers and sisters in a fashion befitting their rank; that on the contrary she had found him only rich enough to secure her own comfortable existence, and for this she had chained herself to a turtle dove whose eternal cooing was beginning to weary her beyond endurance; that now her last hope of the riches, which one had a right to expect in the house of a magician, had vanished, and that if it were not for the gossip of the townsfolk, she would return to her father's house.

With this statement Rosalie stopped and looked around her, frightened by her own frankness, which she now recognized as unwise and fatal to the last degree.

The unlooked-for and dignified reserve of her injured husband, together with his ghastly paleness disturbed her, and her inquietude grew to painful anxiety as he maintained silence. At length he said: "I have learned to love you truly and passionately, my wife, and now you show me how you have returned the affection which my heart bestowed upon you. You are right when you accuse me of having laid too much stress upon vain trifles. For that very fault I have been most severely punished, for had I wooed you in woollen, instead of in velvet, I should never have had the misfortune to be bound to a woman like you. Nor was it love that led me to you, but the miserable ambition to bring a nobleman's

daughter into my burgher home. So we both deceived each other, and now if you wish to return whence I took you — you may leave my home unhindered."

The young wife buried her face in her hands and answered: "No, no, life is too miserable and poverty-stricken at home and I have suffered too much in the long struggle to keep up appearances. And then what would people say? No, no, — I will do everthing that I can to please you."

"Very well, you may stay," he replied gloomily.

Frau Schimmel, who had been in the room for some time, turned to the notary and said: "The Court apothecary used to say that I was stupid, but thirty years ago I foretold what has happened here to-day."

She then implored Zeno to throw the elixir into the Pleisse, but for the first time he exhibited a will of his own. He put

the phial and the document in his father's writing into his breast pocket, and tucking the gray-haired notary under his arm, he left the room.

Frau Schimmel followed his example. Having reached the ground-floor she stopped and, shaking her gray head, murmured: "Doctor Melchior was such a wise man, I wonder he did not order that each of his successors should make the girl of his choice inhale the elixir before he proposed to her. The life I led with Vorkel, and with my second husband Schimmel, who lies beside the first in the churchyard, was hardly perfect, but Zeno's existence will be hell upon earth."

But this time Frau Schimmel was a little wide of the mark in her prophesy. The two young people, for a time, treated each other distantly and coldly, but Frau Rosalie learned to regard her husband with a timid respect that sat well upon

her. As for him he was transformed into a stern man since he had inhaled the elixir, and his severe dress seemed but an outward sign of his earnestness. Before the year was out a boy was given to them, and when Rosalie saw him take the little one in his arms and kiss it, she called him to her bedside and whispered: "Forgive me."

He made a sign of pardon, and stooping, kissed her white face, that was still the dearest in the world to him. Then he went to his own room and inhaled the elixir whose properties and effect he had long before learned from Frau Schimmel. He called aloud, as if speaking to another person: "If she be good to the child, I will no longer make her feel how she hurt me, though I can never forget it."

But it was not granted to him to show by his actions that he had forgiven her, for during the night fever supervened, and before morning she died.

Her hot hand had lain in his, just before her heart ceased to beat, and had pressed it, as if in farewell.

Frau Schimmel followed her darling's unfortunate wife shortly afterwards. Her death was a peaceful and happy one, for Zeno held her withered hand, and talked to her of the days when she had dressed him in his beautiful light-blue frocks. He closed her eyes himself, and followed her coffin to the churchyard.

Only Herr Winckler remained to the widower, who lived alone with his son in The Three Kings, and like a father, more than a friend, aided him in his researches concerning the elixir.

They discovered that it produced its effect only on those who were connected with the Ueberhell family. This was a great disappointment to Zeno, for he set a high value upon truth, and had heard from his father's friend what great blessings for

mankind the dead man had anticipated from his discovery. All his hopes of using it in his profession to make hardened sinners confess their misdeeds, were therefore, vain. For this purpose it was certainly useless and Zeno and Herr Winckler concluded that the reason why its effect was so limited was because it owed its power to the blood of a child of the Ueberhell race.

That its potency extended to those who married into the Ueberhell house was proved by its effect upon Frau Rosalie. As it had also once vanquished Frau Schimmel, they argued that the Court apothecary must have used other blood beside his own, for he certainly had never been connected with his housekeeper by marriage. What had been intended to benefit the whole world, exercised its influence only in one direction, and on the members of one small family; this grieved the

old notary when he recalled the happy and triumphant death-bed of his friend.

The elixir had undoubtedly changed Melchior's son to an incredible extent; from an easily-led, pleasure-loving youth, Zeno became a self-contained man—almost a recluse—and he won for himself the reputation of being one of the severest judges on the Leipsic bench.

High and low doffed their hats to him with respect, but he was not popular.

After he had worked at the Rathhaus long after hours, he would go home alone, and no one sought him out to pass an hour in his company, for everyone feared the rough and brutal frankness of his speech. The gregarious and friendly notary used to wince when he heard his adopted son spoken of as "the hard Ueberhell," or "the sinner's scourge," and he tried his best to make him more human, and to draw him within his circle of friends.

When death overtook Herr Winckler, from whose mouth Zeno used to hear many bitter tirades against the elixir, and Melchior's son found himself entirely alone, and making always more enemies by his irrepressible instinct to speak out what he thought to be the truth, he would sometimes ask himself if it were not better to destroy the elixir, which had brought him nothing but misery, and thus to spare his son and succeeding generations.

But the stern upholder of the law did not feel that he had the right to disobey the instructions of his father. And so the elixir descended to his son, and was given to him on his twenty-fifth birthday by his guardian, for Zeno died before his only child reached that age.

What happened to this second Melchior Ueberhell whose unfortunate history. . . .

Here the story broke off. The son of one of my friends had found it in an old

chest, when he was playing in the attic of The Three Kings. It was written in a discoloured blank-book, which had escaped the devastations of the mice and insects, because it had lain under a pile of aromatic herbs and drugs that had probably belonged to the shop of the Court apothecary.

Between the last page and the cover of the blank-book, which was confided to me, I found a continuation by a later Ueberhell.

This appendix could hardly have been written earlier than towards the end of the last century, to judge by the paper, the stiff, old-fashioned handwriting and, more surely still, by the fact that the writer mentions vaccination as a new discovery. Inoculation was first tried in 1796, and three years later an institution was opened in London where a Leipsic professor of medicine gave lectures.

This communication is signed: "Doc-

tor Ernst Ueberhell, Professor of Medicine." And runs as follows:

Several centuries have passed since the time of the ancestor to whom we owe the wonderful history of the elixir as written in this book, and preserved from generation to generation in our family.

Many Ueberhells have closed their eyes forever, since then, and even the graves of Dr. Melchior and his beautiful wife Bianca have disappeared, owing to the removal of the burying-ground.

On the other hand the portrait in red crayon of Frau Bianca and the little Zeno is still carefully preserved as a most precious heirloom, and was the picture that inspired my sainted father with the desire to become an artist.

Our forebear Dr. Melchior devoted the best of his energies to the benefit, as he thought, of his race, perhaps indeed of all mankind, and yet his efforts were unavail-

ing, for to my sorrow must I acknowledge that much of the enmity felt towards our family, and the disrepute into which our good old name fell, was caused by the elixir. The majority of Ueberhells were accused of presumption and arrogance, of opiniativeness and pugnacity. Many had made themselves disagreeable to their neighbours by their caustic criticisms and ill-natured complaints, at the same time bringing misfortune upon themselves by a most curious exhibition of their own faults.

The whole race degenerated so rapidly through their unbridled license and lack of consideration for others, that they ceased to be received by the members of the better circles, and there came to be an offensive saying that in Leipsic there were men, women, and Ueberhells.

This dislike and animosity were visited upon one generation after another until finally it affected the worldly prosperity of

the family. Even The Three Kings in the Katharinenstrasse which, by the way, had long ceased to be known by that name, was lost to us, and so remained for many years until my sainted father recovered it again, and that the Ueberhells did not fall into even greater distress was due largely to the timidity, nay absolute terror, with which they inspired many people.

From several of my relatives — and they without exception made use of the elixir when they received it on their twenty-fifth birthday — I have heard many particulars concerning the experience, but there was only one who ever said that he had been happier and more contented because of it, and that was my sainted father, the painter, Johannes Ueberhell.

He lost his father very early, and was brought up and educated in poverty and distress by his good mother who remained a widow. It was she who sold the last of

the jewels and plate that had come down to her from earlier and more prosperous days, in order to make it possible for Johannes to go to Dresden and study under a good master.

He was a virtuous youth, with a simple heart, and a disposition so gay that the unfortunate forgot their sorrow whenever he appeared.

Even as a child—so I have heard my grandmother say—he was so cheerful and contented despite their bitter poverty, that he made up a little prayer for himself in which he used to thank God for having created him.

This man, then, grew up to be true-hearted and sincere without the elixir, but he made use of it, none the less, when it came into his possession, and it proved a great blessing to him. As a light-hearted and modest youth—so diffident that he was timid in his intercourse with older persons—he

wandered over the Alps, with only fifty thalers in his pocket and a small knapsack on his back, to Rome where he was received into the studio of one of the most distinguished painters, as apprentice. This latter very soon became jealous of the great talent exhibited by my father and a competition occurring, exerted all his influence to keep the prizes from the German competitors and have them awarded to Italian artists of much less merit.

My father, unable to overcome his fatal shyness by any effort of will, had not the courage to withstand this unfairness until he was called home by his mother for his twenty-fifth birthday, and made use of the elixir.

This not only gave him the resolution, but forced him to proclaim the truth aloud, and to call injustice by its right name.

Owing to his accusations there was a thorough investigation of the affair, a new

judge was appointed who awarded the first prize at once to Johannes Ueberhell, the said prize consisting of a magnificent commission. Having thus achieved an opportunity of proving his worth, he rose quickly to eminence in his profession, and came to be a famous master while he was still a young man.

In later life also he owed nothing but good to the elixir, for his soul was as pure as crystal, and his thoughts of others were so kindly that he could safely speak out everything that was in his mind.

His eyes perceived only the beautiful in the universe; and the beautiful and the true were one with him; so that he made others see and hear nothing save what was lovely and ennobling. Whenever any debasing or evil influence approached him he would trample upon it with all the fierceness of a true Ueberhell; but such conflicts seldom occurred, for his nature was so ex-

alted that it carried him unconscious through the depravity and pollution of this world.

Yes, my father was a happy man, and I cannot deny that the elixir had much to do with his good fortune, for it forced him to reveal his innermost thoughts and to show people frankly what was passing in his mind, thus opening up to them a sunny, pure, and beautiful world which their dull eyes would never have discovered for themselves.

Therefore the best sought him out and made friends with him, and the more he prospered the wiser and better he grew.

One would imagine that the man to whom the elixir had been so beneficial would set a greater value upon it than others, and would be more careful to preserve it for his children and grandchildren. Not so.

After I had finished my studies at the

High School and matriculated at the medical schools of the Leipsic University, my father sent for me to come during my vacation to Rome, where he still lived, and a few weeks before my twenty-fifth birthday I rode through the Porta del Popolo.

The evening before that anniversary my father took out the phial, showed it to me, and asked me what I thought of the verses that he had written on a label and attached to the bottle.

I read them, and they ran as follows:

In hearts alone where modesty resides
  Is found the priceless treasure of Pure Truth.
If pride within you secretly abides
  That, forced by the elixir's charm, The Sooth
You needs must speak — be wholly pure in thought,
  Despising not the teachings wise, of old;
When Truth with equal earnestness was sought·
  If speech be silver, silence then is gold!

The scales seemed to fall from my eyes, and I realised why the Ueberhells had

borne such an evil and dreaded name among their fellow-citizens.

The day after I, too, was to use the elixir and I asked my father: "What shall I do if the power of the essence forces me to speak out every thing that is true, simply because it is true, even when it is against my wish and will tend to my own annoyance and distress, as well as to that of others?"

And he replied solemnly: "The truth? Has any one yet found the right answer to the old question: 'What is Truth?' Can you be sure that the noble and mighty Goddess corresponds to your puny and individual conception of her?"

This very idea had disturbed me during my ride over the Alps, and I exclaimed: "Therein lies the dangerous power of the elixir! It kindles in our minds the confidence that we know the truth by means of a charm, whereas we can only possess the

desire to seek for it. Our certainty also misleads us to constrain others to think as we think, and to despise them and persecute them when they differ from us. The elixir made you happy, my father, because you are good and pure, and because the beautiful, to the pursuit of which you have dedicated your life, ennobles everyone and makes every thing harmonious that comes from you.

"But many generations had to pass before you appeared to do honour to the powers of the elixir. I myself have been cast in a less heroic mould, and who can prophesy what my children, if I ever have any, will be like. In this world where every thing is deceitful, and no one is outspoken, the man who alone is under the necessity of proclaiming what he considers the truth, is like a warrior who opposes himself without shield or harness to a fully armed foe. Therefore, my dear father, I

am very reluctant to make use of the elixir to-morrow."

The old gentleman smiled and replied: "Inhale it in peace, my Ernst, for I will confide to you that I have poured the elixir into the Tiber, on whose banks the battle for the Truth has been so often joined, and where so many factions have imagined that they possessed the elixir of Truth. I have filled the phial with water and a drop of aromatic myrrh. The water I took from the fountain of Trevi, which, you know, is supposed to possess the power of inspiring longing — only for the Eternal City, I believe — but perhaps, in our phial it may awaken a desire for the Eternal Truth. Let us leave the little bottle to our successors. It will not hurt them to use it while they are young, and they can commit to memory, at the same time, the maxim which is attached to it. Then if the harmless liquid which it contains, together with

the adage and the example of their parents, arouse a craving for truth within them we shall have cared better for them than Doctor Melchior did for our ancestors."

"I think so, too," I answered gratefully. "But," I added, "when you poured the elixir into the river did you not sacrifice a valuable aid to yourself in remaining loyal to the Truth in your creations?"

The old gentleman shook his head. "Let the essence flow away!" he answered. "The verity of the Ueberhells, that is what each one thought to be true, was a thing of naught, and, if you consider it closely, a dangerous thing. Only the mind which is capable of comprehending the laws of Nature can escape the danger of mistaking the fortuitous, and ever changing reality, for the eternal and unchangeable truth. Therefore I do not regret what I have done. If one of my grandsons should wish to become a painter I have obviated

the risk of his falling into the error of believing that he has succeeded when he has only slavishly imitated all the imperfections in the objects he sees around him. Nature reflected in a mirror, would be what his pictures under the influence of our elixir, would have been like, and for a true work of art, in the highest acceptation of the term, something further is needed."

These words of my father removed my last regret for the loss of the elixir, and my sons and grandsons who are now grown men have, with God's help, brought it to pass that the burghers of Leipsic are willing once again to associate with the Ueberhells.

I have only one thing more to say before I close this story.

I have already mentioned the fact that I am a physician. When recently from England came the news of the discovery of vaccination and I saw how a small drop

could penetrate through a man's entire system, then I regretted that my father had thrown away the elixir. If I still possessed it I would, despite my advanced age, try the experiment of inoculating myself with it. The exhalation of the elixir acted only on the tongue, and hence its fatal effect. If, however, it had been possible to infiltrate a desire for truth into the whole man, then, ah then! it might have been possible for a man really to know himself, which is the beginning of his salvation. One thought occurs to me for my consolation: A race that has felt itself forced, generation after generation, to serve the truth must finally have acquired an instinct to do so, like the races of pearl-divers who by inheritance can hold their breath a phenomenally long time.

POSTSCRIPT.

At this point my granddaughter Bianca came in to see me. Three days before she had been betrothed to young Karl Winckler, a descendant of the notary Anselmus.

As I had fallen asleep over my writing she read through undisturbed the book that had fallen from my hands onto the floor.

And so the secret was betrayed, for of course she told the story to her lover.

She expressed her thankfulness that the elixir was out of the world, but asserted impertinently, that if a drop of blood had been drawn from Frau Bianca — whose features as well as name she had inherited — instead of from the little Zeno, or if the women of the Ueberhell family had been allowed to inhale the elixir the consequences might have been entirely different.

"Woman," she said, "is ruler in the

kingdom of the affections, and in Leipsic as well as elsewhere, the austere Goddess of Truth will find devoted and loving worshippers, as well as dutiful subjects, only when she exhibits goodness of heart combined with grace of manner as does my grandfather."

Perhaps she is not altogether wrong, though women. . . .

And yet both Greeks and Romans represented Truth under the guise of a woman.

FINIS.

THE GREYLOCK

A FAIRY TALE

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A FAIRY TALE.

ONCE upon a time there was a country, more beautiful than all other lands, and the castle of the Duke, its ruler, lay beside a lake that was bluer than the deepest indigo.

A long time ago the Knight Wendelin and his squire George chanced upon this lake, but they found nothing save waste fields and bleak rocks around it, yet the shores must formerly have borne a different aspect, for there were shattered columns and broken-nosed statues lying on the ground. Against the hillside there were remains of ancient walls that once, undoubtedly, had supported terraces of vines, but the rains had long washed the soil from the rocks, and among the caves and crannies of the fallen stonework, and ruined cellars, foxes, bats, and other animals had found a home.

The knight was no antiquary, but as he looked about him his curiosity was excited: "What can have happened here?" he said, and his squire wondered also, and followed his master. The latter led his horse to the edge of the water to let him drink, for though he had seen many watercourses in the land, he had found nothing in them save stones, and boulders, and sand.

"What if this lake should be salt, like the Dead Sea in the Holy Land?" the knight asked, and the squire answered: "Ugh, that would be a thousand pities!"

As the former raised his hand to his mouth to taste the water, wishing indeed that it were wine, he suddenly heard a strange noise. It was mournful and complaining, but very soft and sweet. It seemed to be the voice of an unhappy woman, and this pleased the knight, for he had ridden forth in search of adventures.

He had already been successful in sev-

eral encounters, and from George's saddle hung the tail-tips of seven dragons which his master had killed. But a woman with a musical, appealing voice, in great danger, offered a rare opportunity to a knight. Wendelin had not yet had any such experience. The squire saw his master's eyes sparkle with pleasure, and scratched his head thinking: "Distress brings tears to most peoples' eyes, but there is no knowing what will delight a knight like him!"

The waters of the lake proved to be not salt, but wonderfully sweet.

When Wendelin reached the grotto from which the complaining notes came, he found a beautiful young woman, more lovely than any one the grey-haired George had ever seen. She was pale, but her lips shone moist and red like the pulp of strawberries, her eyes were as clear and blue as the sky over the Holy Land, and her hair glistened as if it had been spun of the sun-

beams. The knight's heart beat fast at the sight of her loveliness; he could not speak, but he noticed that her hands and feet were bound with chains, and that her beautiful hair was entwined about a circle of emeralds that hung by a chain from the ceiling. She marked neither the knight nor the squire, who stood shading his eyes with his hand in order to see her the better.

Hot rage took possession of the heart of Wendelin when he saw the tears rain down from the lady's large eyes onto her gown, which was already as wet as if she had just been drawn from the lake.

When the knight noticed this, an overwhelming pity chased the anger from his heart, and George, who was a soft-hearted man, sobbed aloud at her pitiful appearance. The voice of the knight, too, was unsteady as he called to the fair prisoner that he was a German, Wendelin by name, and that he

had set out on a knightly quest to kill dragons, and to draw his sword for all who were oppressed. He had already conquered in many combats, and nothing would please him better than to fight for her.

At this she ceased to weep, but she shook her head gently—her hair being chained impeded her motion,—and answered sadly: "My enemy is too powerful. You are young and beautiful, and the darling, perhaps, of a loving mother at home, I cannot bear that you should suffer the same fate as the others. Behold that nut-tree over there! What seem to be white gourds hanging on its naked branches are their skulls! Go your way quickly, for the evil spirit that keeps me prisoner, and will not release me until I have sworn an oath to become his wife, will soon return. His name is Misdral, he is very fierce and mighty, and lives among the waste rocks over there on the north shore of the lake.

You have my thanks for your good intention, and now proceed on your journey."

The knight, however, did not follow her advice, but approached the beautiful woman without more words, and caught hold of her hair to unbind it from the ring. No sooner had he touched the emeralds than two brown snakes came hissing towards him.

"Oho!" exclaimed Sir Wendelin. With one hand he caught their two necks together in his powerful grip, with the other he grasped their tails, tore them in two, and threw them out onto the cliffs above the lake.

When the imprisoned lady saw this, she heaved a deep sigh of relief and spoke: "Now I believe that you will be able to liberate me. Draw this ring from my finger!"

The knight obeyed and as he touched the lady's fingers, which were slender and

pointed, he felt his heart warm within him, and he would gladly have kissed her. But he only withdrew the ring. As he forced it onto the end of his own little finger the lady said to him: "Whenever you turn it round you will be changed to a falcon; for you must know. . . . But woe to us! There, where the water is lashed into foam, is the monster swimming towards us!"

She had hardly finished before a hideous creature drew itself out of the lake. It looked as if it were covered with mouldering pumice-stone. Two toads peeped from the cavities of the eyes, brown eel-grass hung dripping and disordered over its neck and forehead, and in place of teeth there were long iron spikes in its jaws which protruded and crossed one another over its lips.

"A fine wooer, indeed!" thought the squire. "If the stone-clad fellow should not possess a vulnerable spot somewhere

on his body I shall certainly lose my position!"

Similar thoughts passed through the knight's mind, and consequently he did not attack it with his sword, but lifting a huge piece of granite from the ground he hurled it at the monster's head. The creature only sneezed, and passed its hand over its eyes as if to brush away a fly. Then it looked round and, perceiving the knight, bellowed aloud, and changed itself into a dragon spouting fire. Herr Wendelin rejoiced at this, for his favourite pastime was to kill that sort of beast. He had no sooner, however, plunged his good sword into a soft part of the monster, and seen the blood flow from the wound, than his opponent changed itself into a griffin, and raising itself from the ground swooped upon him. His defence now became more difficult, as the evil spirit continued to attack him in ever changing forms, but Sir Wendelin was

no coward, and knew well how to use his arm and sword. At length, however, the knight began to feel that his strength was deserting him; his sword seemed to grow heavier and heavier in his hand, and his legs felt as if an hundredweight had been attached to them. His squire, noting his fatigue, grew faint, and began to think the best thing for him would be to ride off, for the fight was likely to end badly for his master. The knight's knees were trembling under him, and as the monster, in the form of a unicorn, charged against his shield he fell to the ground.

The creature shrank suddenly together and in the guise of a black, agile rat shot towards him.

Sir Wendelin felt that he was losing consciousness, he heard faintly a voice from the grotto where the lady was imprisoned calling to him: "The ring, remember the ring!"

He was just able to turn with his thumb the ring on his little finger. Immediately he felt himself lighter and freer than he had ever felt before, and his heart seemed to harden to a steel spring, while a gay and reckless mood came over him. A wild desire to fly took possession of him at the same time, and it seemed as if he were only fourteen years old once more. Some strange force impelled him aloft into the air, to which he yielded, spreading the two large wings, that he suddenly found himself in possession of, as naturally as if he had used them all his life. He soon felt the feathers on his back stroked by the clouds, and yet he saw everything below him on the earth more distinctly than ever before. Even the smallest things appeared perfectly clear to his sharpened eyes, and yet he seemed to see them as if reflected in a brilliant mirror. He could distinguish even the hairs on the rat and suddenly another

impulse came over him—the impulse to stoop down and catch the long-tailed vermin in his beak and claws. Wendelin had been changed into a falcon, and the rat struggled in vain to escape his powerful attack.

The prisoner had followed the combat first with anxiety, then with joy. While the falcon held the rat in his claws and struck him with his beak again and again, she called the squire to her, and bade him free her from her chains. This was no distasteful task for George, indeed it gave him so much pleasure that he was in no hurry to finish.

When at last all her bonds were loosened, she stood very erect, and lifted her arms, and each moment seemed to make her more lovely and more beautiful. Then she grasped the circle of emeralds, about which the enchanter had wound her golden hair, and waving it high in the air, cried: "Fal-

con, return to the shape you were before. Misdral, hear thy sentence!"

Wendelin assumed immediately his knightly guise, which seemed very clumsy to him after having been a falcon. The rat lengthened itself and expanded until it was once more the giant covered with pumice-stone; it walked no longer erect, however, but crawled along the ground at the feet of the beautiful woman, whimpering and howling like a whipped cur. She then said to it: "At last I possess the emerald circlet, in which resides your power over me. I can destroy you, but my name is Clementine and so I will grant you mercy. I will only banish you to your rocks. There you shall remain until the last hour of the last day. Papaluka, Paparuka,—Emerald, perform thy duty!"

The giant of pumice-stone immediately glowed like molten iron. Once he raised his clenched fist towards Wendelin, and

then plunged into the lake where the hissing and foaming waters closed over him.

The lady and the knight were left alone together. When she asked him what reward he desired, he could only answer that he wished to have her for his wife, and to take her to his home in Germany; but she blushed and answered sadly: "I may not leave this country, and it is not permitted to me to become the wife of any mortal man. But I know how heroes should be rewarded, and I offer you my lips to kiss."

He knelt down before her and she took his head between her slim hands and pressed her mouth against his.

George, the squire, saw this, sighed deeply, and wondered: "Why was my father only a miller? What favours are granted to a knight like that! But I hope the kiss won't be the end of it all; for, unless she is a miserly fairy, there ought to be

much more substantial pay for his services in store for him."

But Clementine bestowed even a richer reward than he had expected upon her rescuer. When she discovered that a lock of the brown hair on Wendelin's left temple had turned grey during the conflict with the evil monster, she said to him: 'All this land shall belong to you henceforth, and because you have grown grey in your courageous fight with evil, you shall be known from this time forward as Duke Greylock. Every prince, yea, even the Emperor himself, will recognize the title which I confer upon you as my saviour, and when the race, of which you are to be the progenitor, is blessed with offspring, I will stand godmother to every first-born. All the sons of your house from first to last, whether they be dark or fair, or brown, shall bear the grey lock. It will be a sign unto your posterity that much good

fortune awaits them. My authority, however, is limited, and if at any time a higher power should hinder me from exerting my influence in behalf of one of your grandsons, then will the grey lock be missing from his head, and it will depend altogether on himself how his life unfolds itself. One thing more. Give me back my ring and take instead this mirror, which will always show to you and yours whatever you hold most dear, even when you are far away from it."

"Then it will ever be granted to me to bring your face before my eyes, oh! lovely lady!" the knight exclaimed.

The fairy laughed and answered: 'No, Duke Greylock—the mirror can only reflect the forms of mortals. I know a wife awaiting you, whom you will rather see than any picture in the glass, even were it that of a fairy. Receive my thanks once more! you are duke, enter now into your dukedom!"

With these words she disappeared. A gentle rustling and tinkling was heard through the air, the waste ground covered itself with fresh green, the dry river beds filled with clear running water, and on their banks appeared blooming meadows, shady groves and forests. The broken walls against the hillsides fitted themselves together, rose higher and supported once more the terraces covered with vine stocks and fruit-trees. Villages and cities grew into form and lay cradled in the landscape. Beautiful gardens bloomed forth, full of gay flowers, olive-trees, orange-trees, citron, and fig, and pomegranate-trees, each covered with its golden fruit or many-seeded apples. In the neighbourhood of the grotto in which the fairy had been imprisoned a park of incomparable beauty grew into view, where brooks whispered and fountains played, and shady pergolas appeared, formed of gold and silver trellises, over which a thousand

luxuriant creepers clambered, holding by their little tendril hands.

The fallen columns stood up again, the mutilated marble statues found new noses and arms, and in the background of all this growing magnificence the young duke perceived—at first dimly, as if obscured by mists, then more distinctly—the outline of a palace with *loggie*, balconies, columned halls, and statues in bronze and marble around the cornice of its flat roof.

George, the squire, gazed in open-mouthed wonder, and his mouth remained open until he entered the fore-court of the palace. Then he only closed it to give his jaws a little rest before their future labours began, for such a good smell from the kitchen greeted him that he ordered the willing cook to satisfy immediately the demands of his appetite, as his hunger was greater than his curiosity.

Sir Wendelin continued his way through

the passages, chambers, halls, and courts. Everywhere servants, guards, and heyducks swarmed, and from the stables he heard the stamping of many horses, and the jingle of their halter chains as they rattled them against their well-filled mangers. Choruses of trumpeters played inspiriting fanfares, and from the assembled people in the forecourt a thousand voices shouted again and again: "Hail to his Grace Duke Greylock, Wendelin the First! Long may he live!"

The knight bowed graciously to his good people, and when the Chancellor stepped forward, and after a deep reverence set forth in a carefully prepared speech the great services which the duke had rendered to the country, Wendelin listened with polite attention, though he himself was quite ignorant of what the old man was talking about.

Sir Wendelin had lived through so many adventures that it pleased him now

to sit peacefully on his throne, and he did his best to be worthy of the honours which the fairy had conferred upon him. After he had learned the duties of a ruler from A to Z, he returned to Germany to woo his cousin Walpurga. He led her back to his palace, and for many years they governed the beautiful land together. All of the five sons which his wife bore to him, came into the world with the grey lock. They all grew to be brave men and loyal subjects of their father, whom they served faithfully in war, holding fraternally together and greatly enlarging the boundaries of his dukedom by their prowess.

A long time passed and generation after generation of the descendants of the worthy Sir Wendelin followed one another. The first-born son always bore the name of the progenitor of the family, and the fairy Clementine always appeared at the baptism. No one ever saw her; but a gentle

tinkling through the palace betrayed her presence, and when that ceased, the grey lock on the infant's temple was always found to have twisted itself into a curl.

At the end of five hundred years, Wendelin XV. was carried to his grave. No Greylock had ever possessed a more luxuriant grey curl than his, and yet he had died young. The wise men of the land said that even to the most favoured only a fixed measure of happiness and good luck was granted, and that Wendelin XV. had enjoyed his full share in the space of thirty years.

Certain it is that from childhood everything had prospered with this duke. His people had expected great things of him when he was only crown prince, and he did not disappoint them when he came to the throne. Every one had loved him. Under his leadership the army had marched from one victory to another. While he held the

sceptre one abundant harvest followed another, and he had married the most beautiful and most virtuous daughter of the mightiest prince in the kingdom.

In the midst of a hot conflict, and at the moment that his own army sent up a shout of victory, he met his death. Everything that the heart of man could desire had been accorded to him, except the one joy of possessing a son and heir. But he had left the world in the hope that that wish, too, would be fulfilled.

Black banners floated from the battlements of the castle, the columns at its entrance were wreathed in crape, the gold state-coaches were painted black, and the manes and tails of the duke's horses bound with ribbons of the same sombre hue. The master of the hunt had the gaily-colored birds in the park dyed, the schoolmaster had the copy-books of the boys covered with black, the merry minstrels in the land

sang only sad strains, and every subject wore mourning. When the ruby-red nose of the guardian of the Court cellar gradually changed to a bluish tint during this time, the Court marshal thought it only natural. Even the babies were swaddled in black bands. And besides all this outward show, the hearts too were sad, and saddest of all was that of the young widowed duchess. She also had laid aside all bright colours, and went about in deepest mourning, only her eyes, despite the Court orders in regard to sombre hues, were bright red from weeping.

She would have wished to die that she might not be separated from her husband, save for a sweet, all-powerful hope which held her to this world; and the prospect of holy duties, like faint rays of sunshine, threw their light over her future, which would otherwise have seemed as dark as the habits of the Court about her.

Thus five long months passed. On the first morning of the sixth month cannon thundered from the citadel of the capital. One salvo followed another, making the air tremble, but the firing did not waken the citizens, for not one of them had closed an eye the foregoing night, which, according to the oldest inhabitants, had been unprecedented. From the rocky district on the north shore of the lake, where Misdral lived, a fearful thunder-storm had arisen, and spread over the city and ducal palace. There was a rolling and rumbling of thunder and howling of wind, such as might have heralded the Day of Judgment. The lightning had not, as usual, rent the darkness with long, jagged flashes, but had fallen to the ground as great fiery balls which, however, had set nothing aflame. The watchmen on the towers asserted that above the black clouds a silver-white mist had floated, like a stream of milk over dark

wool, and that in the midst of the rumbling and crashing of the thunder they had heard the sweet tones of harps. Many of the burghers said that they too had heard it, and the ducal Maker of Musical Instruments declared that the notes sounded as if they had come from a fine harpsichord—though not from one of the best—which some one had played between heaven and earth.

As soon as the firing of cannon began, all the people ran into the streets, and the street-cleaners, who were sweeping up the tiles and broken bits of slate that the storm had torn from the roofs, leaned on their brooms and listened. The Constable was using a great deal of powder; the time seemed long to the men and women who were counting the number of reports, and there seemed no end to the noise. Sixty guns meant a princess, one hundred and one meant a prince. When the sixty-first was heard, there was great

rejoicing, for then they knew that the duchess had borne a son; when, however, another shot followed the one hundred and first, a clever advocate suggested that perhaps there were two princesses. When one hundred and sixty-one guns had been fired, they said it might be a boy and a girl; when the one hundred and eightieth came, the schoolmaster, whose wife had presented him with seven daughters, exclaimed: "Perhaps there are triplets, *feminini generis!*" But this supposition was confuted by the next shot. When the firing ceased after the two hundred and second gun, the people knew that their beloved duchess was the mother of twin boys.

The city went crazy with joy. Flags bearing the national colours were hoisted in place of the mourning banners. In the show-windows of the drapers' shops red, blue, and yellow stuffs were exhibited once

more, and the courtiers smoothed the wrinkles out of their brows, and practised their smiles again.

Every one was delighted, with the exception of the Astrologer, and a few old women and wise men, who drew long faces, and said that children born in such a night had undoubtedly come into the world under inauspicious signs. In the ducal palace itself the joy was not unclouded, and it was precisely the most faithful and devoted of the servants who seemed most depressed, and who held long conferences together.

Both of the boys were well formed and healthy, but the second-born lacked the grey curl which heretofore had never failed to mark each new-born Greylock.

Pepe, the Major-domo, who was a direct descendant of George, the squire, and who knew the history of the ducal family better than any one else, for he had learned it from his grandfather, was so dejected that

one would have imagined a great misfortune had befallen him, and in the evenings, when he sat over his wine in company with the Keeper of the Cellar, the Keeper of the Plate and the Decker of the Table, he could not resist giving expression to his presentiments. His conviction that Bad Luck had knocked at the door of the hitherto fortunate Greylocks was finally shared by his companions.

That an unhappy future awaited the second boy was the firm belief, not only of the servants, but of the whole Court. The unlucky horoscope cast by the Astrologer was known to all, the wise men of the land confirmed it by their predictions, and soon it was proved that even the fairy Clementine was powerless to avert the misfortune that threatened the youngest prince. On the day of the baptism, neither the gentle tinkling sound, nor the sweet perfume, which had heretofore announced her pres-

ence, were perceptible. That she had not deserted the ducal house altogether was shown by the fact that the lock on the temple of the first-born twined itself into a perfect curl. The lock on the left temple of the second son remained brown, and not a sign of grey could be discovered even with a magnifying glass. The heart of the young mother was filled with alarm, and she called the old nurse who had taken care of her dead husband when he was a baby, to ask her what had happened at his baptism, and the old woman burst into tears, and ended by betraying the gloomy forecasts of the Astrologer and wise men. That a Greylock should go through life without the white curl was unheard of, was awful! And the old nurse called the poor little creature, "an ill-starred child, a dear pitiable princeling."

Then the mother recalled her last dream, in which she had seen a dragon attack

her youngest boy. A great fear possessed her heart, and she bade them bring the child to her. When they laid him naked before her, she stroked the little round body, the straight back, and well-shaped legs with her weak hands, and felt comforted. He was a beautifully-formed, well-developed child, her child, her very own, and nothing was lacking save the grey lock. She never wearied of looking at him; at last she leaned over him and whispered: "You sweet little darling, you are just as good, and just as much of a Greylock as your brother. He will be duke, but that is no great piece of luck, and we will not begrudge it to him. His subjects will some day give him enough anxiety. He must grow to be a mighty man for their sakes, and I doubt not that his nurse gives him better nourishment to that end than I could who am only a weak woman. But you, you poor, dear, little ill-omened mite, I

shall nourish you myself, and if your life is unhappy it shall not be because I have not done my best."

When the Chief Priest came to her, to ask her what name she had chosen for the second boy—the first, of course, was to be Wendelin XVI — she remembered her dream, and answered quickly: "Let him be named George, for it was he who killed the dragon."

The old man understood her meaning, and answered earnestly: "That is a good name for him."

Time passed, and both of the princes flourished. George was nourished by his own mother, Wendelin by a hired nurse. They learned to babble and coo, then to walk and talk, for in this respect the sons of dukes with grey locks are just like other boys. And yet no two children are alike, and if any schoolmaster tried to write an exhaustive treatise on the subject of educa-

tion, it would have to contain as many chapters as there are boys and girls in the world, and it would not be one of the thinnest books ever published.

The ducal twins from the beginning exhibited great differences. Wendelin's hair was straight and, save for the grey lock, which hung over his left temple like a mark of interrogation, jet black; George, on the contrary, had curly brown hair. Their size remained equal until their seventh year, when the younger brother began to outstrip the older. They loved one another very fondly, but the amusements that pleased one failed to attract the other; even their eyes seemed to have been made on different patterns, for many things that seemed white to George appeared black to his brother.

Both received equal care and were never left alone. The older brother found this but natural, and he liked to lie still, and

be fanned, or have the flies brushed away from him, and to have some one read fairy stories, which he loved, aloud to him until he dozed off to sleep. It was astonishing how long and how soundly he could sleep. The courtiers said that he was laying up a store of strength, to meet the demands that would be made upon him when he came to the throne.

Even before he could speak plainly, he had learned to let others wait upon him, and would never lift his little finger to do anything for himself. His passive face and large melancholy eyes were wonderfully beautiful, and inspired even his mother with a feeling of awe and respect. She never had cause to feel anxious about him, for there was no better, nor more obedient child in the whole land.

The ill-omened boy, George, was the exact opposite of his brother. He, on the contrary, had to be watched and tended, for

his veins seemed to run quicksilver. One would have been justified in saying that he went out to meet the misfortune which was so surely awaiting him. Whenever it was possible he gave his nurses and attendants the slip. He planned dangerous games, and incited the children of the castle servants and gardeners to carry out the mischief which he had contrived.

But his favorite pastime was building. Sometimes he would erect houses of red stone, often he would dig great caves of many chambers and halls in the sand. At this work he was much more energetic than his humbler playfellows, and he would be dirty and dripping with perspiration when he returned to the castle. The courtiers would shake their heads over him in disapprobation, and then look approvingly at Wendelin, who was a true royal child and never got his white hands dirty.

There was no doubt but that George

was cast in a less aristocratic mould than his brother. When Wendelin complained of the heat, George would spring into the lake for a swim, and when Wendelin was freezing, George would praise the fresh bracing air. The duchess often sighed for a thousand eyes that she might the better look after him, and she constantly had to scold and reprove him, whereas her other son never heard anything but soft words from her. But then George would fly into her arms in a most unprincely manner, and she would kiss him and hug him, as if she never wanted to let him go, while her caresses of her elder son were restricted to a kiss on his forehead, or to stroking his hair. George was by no means so beautiful as his brother; he had only a fresh boyish face, but his eyes were exceptionally deep and truthful, and his mother always found in them a perfect reflection of what was in her own heart.

The two boys were as happy as is every child who grows up in the sunshine of its mother's love, but the lords and ladies about the Court, and the castle-servants felt that misfortune had already begun to dog the footsteps of the younger prince. How constantly he was in disgrace with the duchess! And the accidents that had already happened in the eleven years of his life were too numerous to count. While bathing he had ventured too far out into the lake and had been nearly drowned; once, while riding in the ring, he had been thrown over the barriers by an unmanageable horse; indeed the Court-physician was certain to be called from his night's rest at least once a month, to bind up bloody wounds in the young prince's head, or bruises on his body.

No one, save the Seneschal of the Royal Household, and the Master of Ceremonies bore the unruly boy any malice, but every

one pitied him as an ill-starred child. With what relentlessness his evil destiny pursued him was first made clear when a stone house, which he, together with some other boys, had built, fell down on top of him. When they drew him out from under the blocks and stones he was unconscious, and the Major-domo, who had been attracted by the cries of George's companions, carried him into the prince's room, laid him on the bed, and watched by him until the physician was called.

The old nurse, Nonna, aided the Major-domo, and these two faithful souls confided their anxiety to one another. They recalled the unlucky signs that had accompanied his entrance into the world, and Pepe expressed his fear that the unfortunate child would not come to life again.

"'Tis very sad," he continued, "but I doubt not it would be better for the ducal family if Heaven were now to remove him,

for an early death is, after all, preferable to a long life of vexation and misery."

The boy heard this conversation word for word, for, although he could move neither hand nor foot, and kept his eyes closed, his hearing and understanding were wide awake.

Old Nonna had shed many tears during good Pepe's speech, and he was trying to comfort her when George suddenly sat up, rubbed his eyes with the back of his hands, stretched himself, and then, agile as a brook trout, sprang out of bed.

The two old people screamed in their astonishment, then laughed louder in their joy; but the Court physician, who was just entering the room, looked very much disgusted and disappointed, for he saw the beautiful prospect of saving the life of one of the royal children dissolve before his very eyes.

At the time of this accident the Duchess was away from home. On her return she

forced herself to reprove George for his recklessness before she yielded fully to her motherly affection. When George threw his arms around her neck and asked her if it were really true that he was an ill-starred child, and would never have anything but bad luck as long as he lived, she nearly burst into tears. But she restrained herself, called Pepe and Nonna a couple of old geese, and the "signs," which they had talked about, stupid nonsense. Then she left the room hurriedly and George thought that he heard her crying outside. He had gathered from her tone that she was not convinced of what she was saying, and was only trying to quiet his fears, and from that hour he, too, regarded himself as a child destined to adversity. This was indeed unfortunate, yet it had its compensation, for each morning he anticipated an unhappy day, and when in the evening he looked back on nothing

but pleasure and sunshine, he went to bed with a heart full of gratitude for the good which he had enjoyed but which did not rightfully belong to him. From this time his mother had him more carefully guarded than before, she herself even followed him about anxiously, like a hen who has hatched a duckling, and forbade him to build any more stone-houses.

The noble Duchess was just then weighed down with other cares. One of her neighbors, a king, who had often been defeated in battle by her husband and her husband's father, thought it an excellent opportunity, while the duchy of the Greylocks was ruled only by a woman and her Councillors, to invade the land, and win back some of the provinces which he had formerly lost. Moustache, her Field-marshal, had led forth the army, and a battle was now imminent, which like all other battles, must end either in victory or defeat.

One day a messenger came from the camp, bringing a letter from the brave marshal, who demanded more troops, saying that the enemy far out-numbered him. Then the Prime Minister called the Great Council together, from which, of course, the Duchess could not be absent, and during the time that she presided over the Councillors' meeting, she lost sight of George for the first time for many weeks.

The naughty boy was delighted. He slipped out of the castle, whence his older brother would not move, on account of the bad weather, went down to the shore of the lake, and finding that it was unusually rough, he, together with the son of the head-gondolier, sprang into a small boat, and drove it with powerful strokes out among the waves. The wind lifted the brown curls of the boy, and whenever a large wave bore the skiff aloft on its crest, he shouted with joy. Hitherto he had only

been allowed to go on the lake in a well-manned, safe boat, and then the sailors were under orders to keep to the southern half of the lake. Consequently an excursion on the water had seemed but a mild amusement; but to be his own master, and to fight thus untrammelled against the winds and waves was pleasure such as he had never before experienced.

He had never yet visited the northern part of the lake, there where it was so dark, and mysterious, and where—as old Nonna used to relate—evil spirits dwelt, and a giant covered with pumice-stone was compelled by a curse to live. Perhaps, if he could only get to the other shore, he might see a ghost! That was a tempting prospect! So he turned the bow of the boat towards the north, and bidding his companion to row hard, did the same himself.

As they got further north, the waves increased in size, a storm arose and blew

fiercely in their faces; but the rougher the lake became, the gayer and more boisterous grew George's mood.

His companion began to be afraid, and begged that they might return, but George, though it was not his custom, made his princely authority felt, and sternly commanded the boy to do as he was bid.

All at once it became dark around them, and it seemed as if a powerful sea-horse must have got under the skiff and lifted it with his back, for George was hurled into the air. Then he felt himself caught by a rushing whirlpool which sucked him in its circles to the bottom. He lost breath and consciousness. When he came to himself again, he found himself in a closed cave, amidst strange forms of grey-brown, dripping stalactites. Above the arches of the roof he heard a loud, grunting laugh, and a voice, that sounded like the hoarse howl of a dog, cried several times: "Here we

have the Wendelin brood! At last I have the Greylock!"

Then George remembered all that he had overheard Pepe and Nonna relate, and all that he had coaxed out of them by his questions. He had fallen into the hands of the evil spirit, Misdral, and now the real misfortune, which had threatened him ever since his birth, was to begin. He was freezing cold, and very hungry, and as he thought of the beautiful gardens at home, of the well-spread table in his father's castle, at which he used to sit so comfortably in his high-backed chair, and of the well-fed lackeys, he felt quite faint.

He also realized what terrible anxiety his absence would cause his mother. He could see her running about, weeping, with her hair in disorder, seeking him every where.

When he was smaller she had often taken him into her bed and played "Little

Red Riding Hood" with him, and he said to himself that for that and many succeeding nights she would find no rest on her silken cushions, but would wet them with her tears. These recollections brought him to the verge of weeping, but the next instant he stamped his foot angrily, in rage against his weakness.

He was only thirteen years old, but he was a true Greylock, and fear and cowardice were as unknown to him as to his ancestor, Wendelin I. So when he heard the voice of the wicked Misdral again, and listened to the curses which it heaped upon his family, George's anger grew so hot that he picked up a stone, as the first Wendelin had done five hundred years before, to hurl it in the monster's wrinkled face. But Misdral did not show himself, and George had to give up the expectation of seeing him, for he gathered from the conversation between the two spirits that,

owing to an oath which he had given to the fairy, Misdral dared not lay hands on a Wendelin, and that, therefore, he had planned to starve him (George) to death. This prospect seemed all the more dreadful to the boy because of his hunger at that moment.

The cave was lighted by a hole in the roof of rocks, and as George could cry no more, and had raged enough against himself and the wicked Misdral, there was nothing further for him to do but to look about his prison, and examine the stalactites which surrounded him on all sides. One of them looked like a pulpit, a second like a camel, a third made him laugh, for it had a face with a bottle-nose, like that of the chief wine cooper at the castle. On one of the columns he thought he discerned the figure of a weeping woman, and this made his eyes fill with tears again. But he did not mean to cry any more, so he turned

his attention to the ceiling. Some of the stalactites that hung from it looked like great icicles, and some of them looked like damp, grey clothes hung out to dry. This recalled the appearance of the wash hanging in the garden behind the palace — a long stocking, or an unusually large shirt descending below the rest of the clothes — and he remembered how, in the fall, after the harvest, the clothes-lines used to be tied to the plum-trees, and the ends decorated with branches still bearing the blue, juicy fruit, and then his hunger became so ravenous that he buckled his belt tighter round his waist and groaned aloud.

Night fell. The cave grew dark, and he tried to sleep, but could not, although the drops of water splashed soothingly, and monotonously from the roof into the pools below.

The later it grew, the more he was tormented by his hunger, and the flapping of

the bats, which he could not see in the dark.

He longed for it to be morning, and more than once, in his great need, he lifted his hands and prayed for deliverance, and yet more passionately for a piece of bread, and the coming of day. Then he sat lost in thought, and bit his nails, for the sake of having something to chew. He was aroused by a splash in one of the puddles on the floor. It must be a fish! He sat up to listen, and it seemed as if some one called to him gently. He pricked up his ears sharply, and then! — no, he had not deceived himself, for the friendly words came distinctly from below: "George, my poor boy, are you awake?"

How they comforted him, and how quickly he sprang up in answer to the question! At last he was saved. That was as certain to him as that twice two makes four, although it might have been otherwise.

Over the pool, from which the small voice had sounded, appeared now a dim light, a beautiful goldfish lifted its head out of the water, opened its round mouth, and said, in a scarcely audible tone,—for a real fish finds it difficult to speak, because it has no lungs,—that George's godmother, the fairy Clementine, had sent it. Its mistress was by no means pleased with George's disobedience; but, as he was otherwise a good boy, and she was pledged to aid the Greylocks, she would help him out of his difficulty this time.

The boy cried: "Take me home take me home, take me to my mother!"

"That would indeed be the simplest thing to do," replied the fish, "and it lies in our power to fulfil your wish; but, if my mistress frees you from the power of the wicked Misdral, she must promise him in exchange that another ill shall befall your house. Your army is in the field,

and if you return to your family, then will the giant help your enemies; they will defeat you, will capture your capital, and possibly something evil might befall your mother."

George sprang up and waved his hand in negation. Then his curly head fell, and he said sadly, but decisively: "I will stay here and starve."

The fish in his delight slapped the water with his tail until it splashed high, and continued, although his first speech had already made him hoarse:

"No, no; it need not be so bad as that. If you are willing to go into the world as a poor boy, and never to tell any one that you are a prince, nor what your name is, nor whence you come, then no enemy will be able to do your army or the lady duchess any harm."

"And shall I never see my mother and Wendelin again?" George asked, and

the tears poured down over his cheeks like the water over the stalactites.

"Oh yes!" the fish replied, "if you are courageous, and do something good and great, then you may return to your home."

"Something good and great," George repeated, "that will be very difficult; and, if I should succeed in doing something that I thought good and great, how could I know whether the fairy considered it so?"

"Whenever the grey lock grows on your head, you may declare yourself to be the son of a duke and go home," the fish whispered. "Follow me. I will light the way for you. It is lucky that you have run about so much and are so thin, otherwise you might stick fast on the way. Now pay attention. This pool drains itself, through a passage under the mountain, into the lake. I shall swim in front of you until we come to the big basin into

which the springs of these mountains empty their waters. After that I must keep to the right, in order to get back into the lake, but you must take the left passage, and let the current carry you along for an hour, when it will join the head of the great Vitale river, and flow out into the open air. Continue with the stream until it turns towards the east, then you must climb over the mountains, and keep ever northwards. Hold your hand under my mouth that I may give you money for your journey."

George did as he was bid, and the fish poured forty shining groschen into his hand. Each one of them would pay for a day's nourishment and a night's lodging.

The fish then dived under, George plunged after it into the pool, and followed the shimmering light that emanated from his scaly guide. Sometimes the rocky passages, through which he crawled on his stomach in shallow water, became so small

that he bumped his head, and had to press his shoulders together in order to pass, and often he thought that he would stick fast among the rocks, like a hatchet in a block of wood. He always managed to free himself, however, and finally reached the big basin, where a crowd of maidens with green hair and scaly tails were sporting, and they invited him to come and play tag with them. But the fish advised him not to stop with the idle hussies, and then parted from him.

George was alone once more, and he let himself be borne along on the rushing subterranean stream. At length it poured out into the open air, as the Vitale river, and the boy fell with it over a wall of rock into a large pool surrounded by thick greenery. There was a great splash, the trout were frightened to death, a dog began to bark, and a shepherd, who was sitting on the bank, sprang up, for the coloured bundle

that had just shot over the falls, now arose from the water and bore the form of a pretty boy of thirteen years.

This apparition soon stood before him, puffing, and dripping, and regarding, with greedy eyes, the bread and cheese which the old man was eating. The shepherd was very, very old, and deaf, but he understood the language of the boy's eyes, and as he had just milked the goats, he held out a cup of the milk to him with a friendly gesture, and broke off a piece of bread for him. Then he invited George to sit down beside him in the sun, which had been up for an hour.

The prince had never before eaten such a meal, but as he sat there in the sun, munching the bread, and drinking goats' milk, he would have thought any one a fool who called him an ill-fated child.

After he had satisfied his hunger, he thanked the shepherd, and offered him one

of the groschen which the fish had given him, but the old man refused it.

George insisted, for it hurt his pride to take anything as a gift from a man clad in rags, but the shepherd still declined, and added, after he had noticed the fine clothes of the little prince, which the water had not entirely spoiled: "What the poor man gives gladly, no gold can repay. Keep your groschen."

George blushed scarlet, put his money in his pocket, and replied: "Then may God reward you." The words sprang naturally and easily to his lips, and yet they were the very ones that the beggars in the duchy of the Greylocks always used.

He ran along by the side of the stream quite fast, in order to dry his clothes, until it was noon, and many thoughts passed through his mind, but so rapidly that he could hardly remember whether they were gay or sad. When at last he sat down to rest

under a flowering elder bush, he thought of his mother, and of the great sorrow that he was causing her, of his brother, and Nonna, and old Pepe, and his heart failed him, and he wept. He might never see them again, for how could he ever accomplish anything that was good and great, and yet the fish had demanded it of him! For three days he continued to be very dejected, and whenever he passed boys at play, or boys and maidens dancing and singing under the trees, he would say to himself: "You are happy, for you were not born under an evil star as I was."

The first night he slept in a mill, the second in an inn, the third in a smithy. Just as he was leaving in the early morning a horseman rode rapidly past, and called out to the smith, who was standing in front of the shop: "The battle is lost. The King is flying. The Greylocks are marching on the capital."

George laughed aloud, and the messenger hearing him, made a cut at him with his riding-whip, but missed him, and the boy ran away. George felt as if some one had removed the burden that had been weighing him down during his wanderings, and he reflected that, if he had remained a prince, and had been at that moment comfortably at home, instead of wandering until he was footsore along the highways, Moustache, the Field-marshal, would have lost the battle.

It was still early when he reached the spot where the river turned to the east. From this point he was to go northwards. He found a path that led from the bank of the river, through the woods, across the mountain chain. The dew still hung on the grass, and above in the oaks and beeches, it seemed as if all the birds were holding high festival, there was such a fluttering, and calling, and chirping, and trill-

ing, and singing, while the woodpecker beat time. The sunshine played among the branches, and fell through onto the flowery earth, where it lay among the shadows of the leaves like so many round pieces of gold. Although George was climbing the mountain, his breath came freely, and all at once, without any reason, he burst into song. He sang a song at the top of his voice, there in the woods, that he had learned from the gardeners. At noon he thought he had reached the top of the mountain, but behind again a yet higher peak arose, and so, after he had eaten the bread and butter which the blacksmith's wife had given him, he continued his way and, as the sun was setting, attained the summit of the second mountain, which was the highest far and near.

Once more he beheld the river which, sparkling and bright, wound through the green plain like a silver snake. Smaller

hills covered with forests fell away on all sides and the tops of the trees caught the radiance of the sinking sun. Over the snow-fields of the further mountain-ranges, a rosy shimmer spread that made him think of the peach blossoms at home; a purple mist obscured the rocky peaks behind him and there, far away to the south, was a tiny speck of blue. That might be his own dear lake, which he was never to see again. It was all so wonderfully beautiful and his heart filled to overflowing with memories and hopes. Neither to the right nor to the left, whither he turned his eyes, were there any boundaries to be seen. How wide, how immeasurably wide was the world which, in the future, was to be his home, in the place of the small walled garden of the castle. Two eagles were floating round in circles under the softly-glowing fleecy clouds, and George said to himself that he was as free and untrammelled

on the earth as they were in the air; suddenly a feeling of delight in his liberty overcame him, he snatched his cap from his head and, waving it aloft, tore down the mountain, as if he were running for a wager. That night he found hospitable housing in the cell of a hermit.

After this he derived much pleasure from his wanderings. He was a child born to bad luck—no denial could change that—nevertheless a child destined to good fortune could hardly have been more contented than he. On the thirtieth day of his journeying he met with a travelling companion in the lower countries, which he had reached some time before. This was a stone-mason's son, who was much older than George, but who accepted the gay young vagabond as his comrade. The youth was returning home after his wanderings as a journeyman and, as he soon discovered that George was a clever, trustworthy boy with all his

wits about him, he persuaded him to offer himself as apprentice to the stone-mason, who was an excellent master in his business. His name was Kraft, and he gladly received his son's companion as apprentice, George having spent his last groschen that very day, and thus the little prince was turned into a stone-mason's apprentice.

In the castle of the Greylocks, meanwhile, there was sorrow and lamentation. The boy who had ventured onto the lake with George, managed to save his life and returned home the following morning, and to repeated questionings he had only the one answer to make — that he had seen the prince drown before his very eyes. With this information the Court had to content itself; but not the duchess, for a king will give up his throne sooner than a mother the hope of seeing her child again. She possessed indeed one means

by which she could know beyond doubt whether her darling were alive or dead, namely the magic mirror which the fairy had given to the first Wendelin, and in which, ever since, the Greylocks had been able to see what they held most dear. In this glass she had seen her husband fall from his horse and die. Once again she took it out of the ivory casket in which it was kept; but so long as George sat imprisoned in the cave of the evil spirit, nothing was to be seen on its smooth surface. That was ominous, yet she ceased not to hope, and thought: "If he were dead, I should see his corpse." She sat the whole night staring in the mirror. In the morning a messenger from the army of the Greylocks arrived, bringing word that the enemy was pressing upon them and that a battle would have to be fought before the fresh troops, which Moustache, the field-marshal, had asked for, could arrive.

The issue was doubtful, and the duchess would better have everything ready for her flight and that of the princes, and, in case of the worst, to carry with her the crown jewels, the royal seal and a store of gold.

The chancellor ordered all of these things to be packed in chests and warned the servants not to forget to add his dressing-gown. Then he begged the noble widow to look into the glass and to let him know as soon as there was any reflection of the battle.

Presently she saw the two armies fall upon each other, but her longing to see her son overcame her immediately, and behold, there in the glass he appeared, seated by the side of an old ragged shepherd and eating bread and cheese, his clothes were soaked and there was no possibility of his changing them. This worried her and she at once pictured him with a cold or lying helpless in the open air, stricken down by

fever or inflammation of the lungs. Henceforth she thought no more about the decisive battle, and forgot all else during the hours that she sat and followed George's movements. Then she sent for huntsmen, for messengers and for all the professors who studied geography, botany, or geology, and bade them look into the mirror, and asked them if they knew where those mountains were, of which they saw the reflection. The smooth surface showed only the immediate surroundings of the boy, and no one could tell what the district was where George wandered. Thereupon she sent messengers towards all points of the compass to seek him.

Thus half the day passed, and when the chancellor came again in the afternoon to inquire after the fortunes of the battle, the duchess was frightened, for she had entirely forgotten the conflict.

She therefore commanded the mirror to

show her again the army and Moustache, the field-marshal, who was a cousin of her late husband. She beheld with dismay that the ranks of her soldiers were wavering. The chancellor saw it, too; he put his hand to his narrow forehead and cried: "Everything is lost! My office, your Highness, and the land! I must to the treasury, to the stables! The enemy—flight—our brave soldiers—I pray your Highness to keep a watch over the battle! More important duties. . . ."

He withdrew, and when half an hour later he returned, very red in the face from all the orders that he had given, and looked over the duchess' shoulder, unperceived into the mirror, he started back and cried out angrily, as no true courtier ought ever to allow himself to do in the presence of his sovereign: "By the blood of my ancestors! A boy climbing a mountain.—And there is such dire need to know . . ."

The duchess sighed and called the battle once more into view. During the time that she had been watching her son, things had taken a better turn. This pleased her greatly, and the chancellor exclaimed: "Did I not prophesy this to your Highness. The circumstances were such that the victory was bound to be ours. Brave Moustache! I had such confidence in him that I saw the caravans bearing the treasure depart, without a pang of uneasiness. Will your Highness be good enough to have them recalled."

After this the duchess had no further opportunity to see the reflection of her boy until the battle was decided and the victory theirs beyond a doubt; then she could use the mirror to gratify the desire of her heart.

When George walked along dejectedly, she thought: "Is that my heedless boy?" and when he looked about him gaily once

more to see what mischief he could get into, she rejoiced, yet it troubled her, too, to have him appear so free from all grief, she feared that he might have entirely forgotten her.

All the expeditions that she sent in search of him were fruitless; but she knew from the glass that he had become apprentice to a stone-mason and had hard work to do. This made her very sad. He was indeed a child born to misfortune, and when she saw him eat out of the same bowl with his companions, food so coarse, that her very dogs would have despised it, she felt that the misery into which he had fallen was too deep, too awful. Yet, strange to relate, he always seemed gay, despite these ills, whereas Wendelin, the heir to the throne, grew more peevish every day.

The duchy of this fortunate youth had been enlarged by the late successful war,

and the assembly of the states of the empire was debating whether it should not be made a kingdom. He possessed everything that it was in the power of man to desire, and yet, with each new month, he seemed to become more unhappy and dejected.

When the heir to the throne drove out in his gilt coach and the duchess heard of the enthusiasm exhibited by the people, or saw him sitting at a feast of pheasants, smacking his lips and drawing the asparagus between his teeth, she reflected on his brother's hard lot and could not help feeling angry with her fortunate son for possessing all the gifts that Destiny refused to her poor outcast George.

Once when the duchess looked in the mirror, she saw George who had carefully taken a clock to pieces, trying to put it together again. A moment later the chancellor and the master of ceremonies came up

behind her in order to look into the glass also. No sooner had they done so than they set up a loud outcry, and behaved as if the enemy had invaded the land again.

"The poor, miserable, pitiable, ill-starred princeling!" one of them exclaimed. "A Greylock, it is unheard of, abominable, sacrilegious," the other moaned. They had indeed beheld a dreadful sight, for they had seen the son of Wendelin XV. beaten over the back by a common workman with a stick. The duchess had to witness many similar outrages later when she saw George in the school to which the stone-mason sent his promising apprentice. Alas! how long the poor child had to bend over his drawing-board and his slate doing dreadful sums, whereas Wendelin only studied two hours a day under a considerate tutor who gently coaxed him along the paths of learning. Everything that seemed difficult was carefully removed from his way, and every-

thing that was unpalatable was coated with sugar before being presented to him. Thus even in school the fortunate child trod a path strewn with roses without thorns, and if he yawned now and then in his tutor's face, the latter could flatter himself that the young prince yawned much more frequently over what other people considered pleasures and amusements.

When he attained his sixteenth birthday, he was declared to be of age, for princes mature earlier than other men. Soon afterwards he was crowned, not duke, but king, and it was remarked that he held his lace handkerchief oftener than ever to his mouth.

The state prospered under his government; for his mother and councillors knew how to choose men who understood their work and did it well. These men acted as privy council to the king. One of them was put in charge of the army, a second of

the Executive, a third of the customs and taxes, a fourth of the schools, a fifth exercised the king's right of pardon, a sixth, who bore the title the Chancellor of the Council, was obliged to do the king's thinking. To this experienced man was also confided the responsibility of choosing a wife for the young king. He acquitted himself wonderfully well of this duty, for the princess whom Wendelin XVI. espoused on his twentieth birthday, was the daughter of a powerful king, and so beautiful that it seemed as if the good God must have made a new mould in which to form her. No more regular features were to be seen in any collection of wax figures; the princess also possessed the art of keeping her face perfectly unmoved. If anything comic occurred, she smiled slightly, and where others would have wept, and thus distorted their features, she only let her eyelids fall. She was moreover very virtuous and, though

but seventeen, was already called "learned." She never said anything silly, and also, no doubt out of modesty, refrained from expressing her wise thoughts. Wendelin approved of her silence, for he did not like to talk; but his mother resented it. She would have liked to pour her heart out to her daughter-in-law, and to make her son's wife her friend and confidante. But such a relationship was impossible; for, when she tried to share with her daughter the emotions which crowded upon her, they rolled off the queen like water off the breast of a swan.

The people adored the royal pair. They were both so beautiful, and looked so noble and princely as they leaned back in the corners of their gilt coach during their drives and gazed into vacancy, as if their interests were above those of ordinary mortals.

Years passed, and the choice of the Chancellor of the Council did not turn out

to be so fortunate as had at first appeared, for the queen gave her husband no heir, and the house of Greylock was threatened with the danger of dying out with Wendelin XVI. This troubled the duchess indeed, but not so much as one would have supposed, for she knew that yet another Greylock lived, and the mother's heart ceased not to hope that he would return one day, and hand down the name of her husband.

She therefore persisted in sending messengers to those lands where, to judge by the costume of the people, the appearance of the country and buildings, as shown in the magic mirror, George was most likely to be found.

Once she allowed her daughter-in-law to look into the smooth glass with her; but never again, for it happened that the queen chanced upon a time when George, poorly dressed, and with great beads of perspira-

tion on his forehead, sat hard at work over his drawing in a miserable room under the roof; her delicate nostrils sniffed the air disdainfully, as if afraid that they might be insulted by any odour of poverty, and she said coldly: "And you wish me to believe that that person is a brother of my high-bred husband? Impossible!"

After this the duchess permitted no one save old Nonna to look into the glass; she, however, spent many hours each day in following the miserable experiences of her unfortunate child. Sometimes indeed it seemed to her as if a little happiness were mixed with the misery of his existence, and it also struck her that her little imp of a George was gradually growing to be a tall, distinguished-looking man with a noble forehead and flashing eyes, whereas Wendelin, despite his beauty and his grey lock, had become fat and red in the face, and looked like a common farmer.

Great was her solicitude for him, and her heart bled when she saw him suffer, which was not seldom; but then, on the other hand, she often had to laugh with him and be merry, when he gave himself up to the strange illusion of being happy. And had she ever seen a face so beaming as his was when one day, in a splendid hall, a stately grey-haired man in a long gown embraced him and laid a laurel wreath on the design for a building, at which she had seen George work. And then he seemed to have gone to another country, and to be living in the midst of the direst poverty, yet somehow the world must have been turned upside down, for he was as light-hearted and gay as if Dame Fortune had poured the entire contents of her cornucopia over him.

He lived in a little white-washed room, which was not even floored, but only paved with common tiles. In the evening he ate

nothing save a piece of bread, with some goat-cheese and figs, and quenched his thirst with a draught of muddy wine which he diluted with water. A squalid old woman brought him this wretched supper, and it cut the duchess to the heart to see him hunt about for coppers enough to pay for it. One day he seemed to have exhausted his store, for he turned his purse upside down and shook it, but not the smallest coin fell out.

This grieved her sorely, and she wept bitterly, thinking of the ease of her other son, and resenting the injustice with which blind and cruel Fortune had bestowed her gifts.

When she had dried her eyes sufficiently to be able to see the picture in the mirror once more, she beheld a long low house by the side of which there was a large space roofed over with lattice work. This was covered by a luxuriant growth

of fig-branches and grape-vine. The moon shed its silver radiance over the leaves and stems, while beneath it a fire cast its golden and purple lights on the house, the trellis roof, and the gay folk supping under it.

Young men in strange garb sat at the small tables. Their faces were wonderfully animated and gay. Before each one stood a long-necked bottle wound with straw, cups were filled, emptied, waved aloft or clinked. With every moment the eyes of the drinkers grew brighter, their gestures freer and more lively; finally one of them sprang up on a table, he was the handsomest of them all,—her own George, and he looked as if he were in Paradise instead of on this earth, and had been blessed by a sight of God and his Heavenly host. He spoke and spoke, while the others listened without moving until he raised a large goblet and took such a long draught that

the duchess was frightened. Then what a wild shout the others sent up! They jumped to their feet, as if possessed, and one of them tossed his cup through the lattice work and vines overhead.

When George got down again, young and old surrounded him, a few of them embraced him, and then the whole gay company began to sing. Later the duchess saw her son whirling madly in the dance with a girl dressed in many colours, who, though beautiful, was undoubtedly only the daughter of a swineherd, for she was barefoot, and kiss her red lips—which indeed no Greylock ought to have done, yet his mother did not begrudge him the amusement.

It looked as if that were happiness, but true happiness it could not be, for such was not granted to a child born to misfortune. Yet what else could it be? At any rate, he had the appearance of being the most blessed of mortals.

He was in Italy; of that she became more and more assured, and yet none of her messengers could find him. A year later, however, her son began to busy himself with matters that would certainly give some clue to her more recent envoys.

George had left his poverty-stricken room and dwelt now in a handsome vaulted chamber. Each day dressed in a fine robe and with a roll of parchment in his hand, he superintended a great number of builders. Often she saw him standing on such high scaffolding that he seemed to be perched between heaven and earth, and she would be overcome by giddiness, though he seemed proof against it.

Once in a while a tall princely-looking man, with a beautiful young woman and a train of courtiers and servants, came to inspect the building. George would be sent for to show the gentleman and the young woman, who seemed to be his daughter,

the plans, and they had long conversations together. At these interviews George was not at all servile; and his gestures were so manly and graceful, his eyes shone so frankly, yet so sweetly and modestly, that his mother yearned to draw him to her heart and kiss him; but that, alas! could not be, and little by little it dawned upon her that he longed for other lips than hers, for the glances that he bestowed upon the maiden bespoke his admiration, which, the duchess noticed, did not seem to displease her.

Once, during an interview with George, she dropped a rose, and when he picked it up, she must have allowed him to keep it, for she gave no sign of disapproval when he kissed it and hid it inside the breast of his doublet. The large architectural drawing had screened this little comedy from curious eyes.

One evening, in the moonlight, the

duchess saw him climb a garden wall, with a lute in his hand, then the sky became overcast, and she could distinguish him no more; she could only see a lighted window where a beautiful girl was standing. The maiden charmed her beyond measure, and she grew hot and cold with the pleasurable anticipation that George might win her for his wife some day and bring her home. But then she reflected that he was a child born to ill-luck, and as such would never be blessed with the love of so exquisite a creature.

What she saw in the next few weeks confirmed this opinion. His manner was usually decisive, abrupt and self-reliant, but now he seemed to her like a clock that points to one hour while it strikes another. At the works he gave his orders as firmly and decidedly as ever; but as soon as he was alone, he looked like a criminal sentenced to death, and either sat bowed down

and miserable or else paced up and down the floor restlessly, gesticulating wildly. Often when he beat his forehead with the palm of his hand or struck his breast with his fist, his mother was frightened.

Once, after a garden party, where he had been fortunate enough to walk alone for a full hour under a shady pergola with the daughter of the gentleman who owned the building in progress, and to kiss her hand many times, he burst into tears as soon as he was in his own room, and behaved so wildly that his mother feared for his reason and wept bitterly also. Just at this time she ought to have felt nothing but joy, joy, heart-felt and unadulterated, for it appeared that the chief of the councillors had in truth been more far-sighted than other people and had not made a mistake in his choice of a queen, for she had just borne a son, and, moreover, one that was a true Greylock. His grey lock was

indeed somewhat thin and lacked the firm curl of the former ones; but every one who was not colour-blind must acknowledge that it was grey.

The duchess would have liked to rejoice sincerely in her grandchild, but her affections were divided, and even when she held it in her arms, she yearned for the magic glass and a sight of her unlucky son.

Wendelin XVI., who had long been satiated with the pleasures which his position offered him, finding them all flat and insipid, experienced for the first time in twelve years a sensation of delight, like any one else, when he heard the faint cry of the infant and learned the good news that his child was a son. Hitherto his greatest satisfaction had been to hear the clock strike five when he had imagined that it was only four.

The child, however, was something en-

tirely new, and his heart, which usually beat as slowly as a clock that is running down, quickened its pulsations whenever he thought of his son. During the first weeks of its life he sat for hours at a time beside the gilt cradle, staring thoughtfully through his eye-glass at the future Wendelin XVII. Soon this occupation ceased to interest him, and he drifted along once more on the sluggish waves of his former existence, from minute to minute, from hour to hour.

The queen, his companion on this placid journey, had grown to be like him in many ways. The two yawned as other people breathe. They knew no desires, for as everything they possessed was always the best that could be had, to-morrow could give them nothing better than to-day. Their life was like a long poplar alley through which they wandered lazily side by side.

Pepe, the major-domo, after Wendelin came to the throne, was made body-servant to the king; he, above all others, was inclined to regard his master, born under a lucky star and possessing everything that one could desire, as a person favoured by Fortune; yet, after he had listened to his sighs and murmurs through many a quiet night, he reflected: "I am better off in my own shoes."

Pepe kept his own counsel and confided to no one save old Nonna what he knew. She, too, had learned to be discreet and consequently did not repeat his confidences even to the duchess, who had enough to bear without that additional burden.

How pale her darling seemed to her when she saw him in the glass! Yet, even on the worst days, he was busy at his place in the piazza, where the cathedral, which he had been building for three years, was nearing completion. The greatest energy

at that moment was being expended on the dome, which rose proudly over the crossing of the nave and transepts. Whenever Nonna looked over the duchess' shoulder to get a glimpse of George, he was always seen there so long as the sun was in the heavens. Many times the hearts of the two women stood still when they saw him climb to the highest point of the scaffolding in order to direct the work from there. Fate had only to make his foot slip one little inch or decree that a wasp should sting him on the finger to put an end to his existence. The poor mother was doubly anxious because he seemed so unconscious of the risk he ran up there and looked about him even more boldly and self-reliantly than usual.

The dome was already perfectly round. Why wasn't it finished, and why must he go on climbing again and again that frightful scaffolding?

"Nonna, Nonna, you must look, I can stand it no longer," she cried one day after she had been regarding the glass for a long time. "Hold me—he is going to jump. Nonna, is he safe? I can no longer see." And the glass shook in her hand.

"Oh!" the old woman answered, heaving a sigh of relief, "there he stands as solidly and firmly as the statue of Wendelin I. in the market-place. See. . . ."

"Yes, yes, there he is," the duchess cried and fell on her knees to thank Heaven.

The nurse continued to look in the glass. Suddenly she shrieked aloud and her mistress sank together and covered her face with her hands. "Has he fallen? Is he dead?" she groaned.

But Nonna, despite her gout, sprang up and ran to her mistress with the mirror in her hand and stammering, half laughing and half crying, like one drunk yet pos-

sessed of his senses: "George, our George, look. Our prince has the grey lock. Here, before my very eyes I saw it grow."

The duchess jumped up, cast one glance into the glass, saw the grey lock distinctly, and then forgetting that she was a princess and Nonna but a humble servant, threw her arms about her and kissed her on the mouth, above which grew so luxuriant a moustache that many a page would gladly have exchanged his young upper lip for her older one. Then the duchess reached once more for the mirror to assure herself that her eyes had not been deceived, but her fingers trembled so with excitement that the glass slipped from her hand and fell to the floor where it broke in a thousand pieces.

What a fright it gave them! Fortunately Nonna, after a lifetime spent in the care of babies, had laid aside what we call nerves, else she had certainly fallen in a

swoon like her mistress; she was consequently able to support the duchess and soothe her with gentle words.

In the meanwhile the young architect from the staging inspected the stone which crowned the dome and found that it had been well set. But he had no suspicion that the grey lock had grown on his head. Older architects came and absorbed his attention. They pressed his hand, praised him and said that he had just finished a marvellous work of art. They examined, with him, the interior of the cathedral, and then appeared the prince for whom George had built the church, and to him the architects explained how solid and well proportioned was the dome which had been finished a few hours before. The noble prince listened with comprehension; after he was satisfied he drew George to his breast and said: "I thank, you my friend. Despite your youth I entrusted you with a

great undertaking and you have more than fulfilled my most sanguine expectations. At my age we count it gain not to be disappointed, and the day when our expectations are not only fulfilled, but surpassed we number among our festivals. Your work will be an ornament to the city and state, and will insure you undying fame. Take this from a man who wishes you well."

The prince took the golden chain from his own neck, hung it about George's, and continued:

"Art is easy, some say; others, that it is difficult. Both are right. It must be delightful and ennobling to design such a work but the carrying out must be laborious and attended with many perplexities. I can see that you have found it so, for only yesterday I remarked with pleasure the youthful glint of your brown hair and today,— no doubt while you were superin-

tending the laying of the dome's crown,—a lock of hair above your left temple has turned grey, Master Peregrinus."

George reeled at this sudden and unexpected fulfilment of the dearest wish of his soul. He had gone out into the world under this name of Peregrinus and had never betrayed the fact that he was a prince's son. For several years his heart had been overflowing with love for the daughter of the prince and he had known that she reciprocated his affection sincerely, yet for the sake of his own family he had battled bravely with his passion and had borne his heartache and longing in silence.

Proofs had not been wanting to show him how devoted the prince was to him, and if he had been able to say to his patron, "I am a Greylock," no doubt his lord would gladly have accorded his daughter's hand to him. George had repeated this to himself a thousand times, but he had

remained firm, had kept his counsel and had not ceased to hope that by righteous energy and industry he might accomplish the "great and good task" which had been required of him in Misdral's cave. When his grey lock grew, the fairy Clementine's fish had said to him, then would he know that he had achieved something great and good, and that he might bear once more the name of his proud race and return home without exposing his family to any danger. He had reached the goal, the task was completed, he might call himself a Greylock once more, for the curl which was the pride of his race now adorned his head too.

The prince watched him turn very red then very pale and finally said inquiringly: "Well, my Peregrinus?" The architect fell upon his knee, kissed the prince's hand and cried:

"I am not Peregrinus. Henceforth I am a Greylock, I am George, the second

son of the Duke Wendelin, of whom you have heard, and I must confess to you, my noble lord, that I love your daughter Speranza, and I would not exchange places with any god if you would but give us your blessing."

"A Greylock!" the prince exclaimed. "Truly, truly this day should not be reckoned among the feast-days but should be regarded as the best day in all the year. Come to my arms, my dear, my worthy son!"

An hour later the architect held the princess in his arms. What a wedding they had! George did not return immediately to his own home. He wrote to his mother that he was alive and well and intended to visit her in company with his young bride as soon as he had finished a great work with which he was occupied. He sent with the letter a portrait of his wife and when the duchess saw it and read

the letter she grew ten years younger from pure delight, and old Nonna at least five.

When Wendelin XVI. was informed that his brother still lived, he smiled and the queen followed his example, but as soon as they were alone she cried: "The land of the Greylocks will be smaller than ever now and even before it was not so great as my father's."

When Speranza presented her husband with a son the duchess and her faithful attendant Nonna went to Italy, and the meeting between mother and son was beyond all measure joyful. Two months she spent with her dear children and then she returned home, George and his wife having promised to visit her the following year in the capital of the Greylocks.

The cathedral was finished. There was no finer building under the sun and artists and connoisseurs flocked from all parts of the world to see it. George received the

commendations of the most critical and his name was ranked among those of the greatest architects.

Proud of his work, yet ever modest, he together with his wife and child returned to his home.

He found great rejoicings in progress when he crossed the frontiers, for Moustache, the field-marshal, had just conquered another enemy, and by the conditions of the treaty of peace another province came into the possession of the Greylocks, making their kingdom then as large as that of the queen's father.

When George entered the capital he found flags flying, heard bells pealing, the explosions of mortars and firing of cannon, sometimes one shot after another, sometimes a deafening salvo of many guns together, and a thousand voices shouting: "Hurrah, hurrah! Long live Wendelin the Lucky!"

The Assembly of States had decided the day before that the king by whom the land had been so wonderfully extended, and whose government had been so prosperous that not even a shadow of misfortune had fallen across it, should be called: "Wendelin the Lucky."

This title of honour was to be seen on all the flags, triumphal arches, transparencies, and even on the ginger-bread cakes in the cook-shops.

George and his lovely wife rejoiced with the other jubilant people, but they were happiest when they were alone with his mother.

Wendelin XVI received his brother and his brother's wife in the great reception room, and even went further forward to meet him than the point prescribed by the master of ceremonies; the queen made good this violation of etiquette by remaining herself well within the boundaries laid

down. After the feast Wendelin went with his brother onto the balcony, and as he stood opposite to George and looked at him more closely he let his languid eyelids droop, for it seemed to him that his brother was a man of iron, and he suddenly felt as if his own backbone were made of dough.

In the evening the lake was beautifully illuminated, and the day was to end with a boating party on the water enlivened with music and fireworks.

In the first boat, on cushions of velvet and ermine, sat Wendelin XVI and his queen, in the second George and his beloved wife. His mother could not bear to be separated from these two, or to miss for even an hour the happiness of having them with her.

The weather for the festivals was as perfect as they could have wished. The full moon shone more brilliantly than usual, as if to congratulate the king on his new

title, the bells pealed forth their chimes again, a chorus of maidens and boys in skiffs followed the state gondola of the royal pair, singing the new song which had just been composed in their honour, and which consisted of twenty-four stanzas, each one ending with the lines:

> "The luck and glory let us sing
> Of lucky Wendelin, our king!"

By his side sat his wife, who continued her complaints against the newly-found brother, and urged her husband to make investigations as to whether or not this architect were a true Greylock, "To be sure, both he and his son have the grey lock," she said, "but then they both have light hair, and the barber's craft has made great strides lately; and certainly that fat-cheeked baby looks as if it belonged in the cradle of a peasant rather than in that of a prince."

Wendelin XVI did not listen to what she said; his heart was very heavy, and every time one of the bells rang out above the others, or the chorus sang, "lucky Wendelin, our king," particularly distinctly and enthusiastically, he felt as if he were being jeered at and ridiculed. He longed to cry aloud in his shame and pain, and to fly for comfort to his sympathetic mother and strong brother in the other boat. When he stared into the water it seemed as if the fish made fun of him, and if he looked at the sky he imagined the moon made a mocking grimace at him, and looked down scornfully at the wretched man whom they called "fortunate." He knew not where to gaze, he withdrew within himself, and tried to shut his ears, while he wished to Heaven that he could change places with the active sailor opposite who was setting the purple sail with his brawny arms.

A light breeze wafted the royal gondola

towards the island where the fireworks were to be displayed. The second boat followed at a short distance. George held his mother's hand and his wife's in his own, few words were spoken, but their very silence betrayed the great treasure of their love and happiness, and spoke more plainly than long discourses how dear these three persons were to one another.

The royal gondola floated quietly past the cliff that separated the southern from the northern part of the lake; no sooner had the second boat approached it, however, than an unexpected and fearful gust of wind blew suddenly from the clefts of the rocks and struck the boat, and before the sailors had time to lower the sail threw it onto its beam ends. George sprang forward instantly to help the sailors right her, but a second gust tore away the flapping sail, and capsized the gondola, which was caught and carried to the bottom by a rush-

ing eddy. Both of the women rose from the waves at George's side. He grasped his mother, and struggled bravely against the wind and current until he laid her on the beach at the foot of the cliff. Then he swam back as rapidly as he could to the place of the accident. His mother was safe, but his wife, his beloved, his all? To rescue her, or to drown with her was his sole idea.

At that moment he perceived a long golden streak rising and falling with the waves. It was a lock of her hair, her wonderful silken hair. With mighty strokes he sped towards it, reached it, grasped it, then his trembling hands felt her body and lifted her up. She breathed, she lived, and it depended on him to save her from the evil spirit, from death. With one arm he held her to him, with the other he parted the waters; but the lake seemed to turn to a mighty torrent that bore down upon him

with its heavy waves. He struggled, he fought with panting breast, yet in vain, always in vain. He felt that his strength was being exhausted. If no one came to his aid, he was lost; he raised his head to look for help.

He saw his brother's gondola sailing as peacefully and undisturbed from storm or accident as a swan in the moonlight, and the bitter thought passed through his mind, that Wendelin was the lucky one, and that he had been born to misfortune.

His arm was struggling with the tide once more, and this time more successfully. Then Speranza opened her eyes, recognized him, and, kissing him on the forehead, murmured: "My own love, how good you are!"

From the cliff the duchess called to him: "George, my best, my only son!"

His heart warmed within him, all his bitterness disappeared, and the waves

seemed to rock him and the burden in his arms as in a cradle. The picture of his mother floated before his vision, that of his child, and of his beautiful work, the great indestructible cathedral, which he had erected to the honour of God. He reflected what sweet joy each new spring had brought him, how he had been blessed in his work, what exquisite delight he derived from all that was beautiful in the world. No, no, no. Of all the men on this earth, he, the child destined to misfortune, was the happiest. Overwhelmed by a feeling of gratitude, he returned his wife's kiss. Saved! She was saved! He felt firm ground beneath his feet; he lifted her on high; but, just as he laid her in the strong arms that reached down from the cliff to receive her, a high wave caught him and dragged him back into the deep, and the waters closed over him.

The next morning a fisherman found

his body. George's wife and mother were saved. The wise men of the land said that the ill-starred child had perished, as they had foreseen, and the people echoed their words.

In the mausoleum of the Greylocks only two places remained empty, and these had to be kept for Wendelin the Lucky and his queen, consequently the ill-omened son might not even rest in the grave of his fathers, and George was buried on a green hillside, whence there was a beautiful view of the lake and distant landscape.

King Wendelin the Lucky and his wife lived to a good old age. After the king became childish, he ceased to groan and whimper in the night, as he had formerly done. When he died, he was interred next to Queen Isabella, in the coldest corner of the marble mausoleum, and no ray of sun ever rested on his stone sarcophagus. His son, Wendelin XVII., visited his

father's grave once a year, on All Saints' Day, and laid a dry wreath of immortelles on the lid of the coffin.

George's resting-place was surrounded by bushes and flowers. His mother and wife and child visited it and cared for it. When the spring came, nightingales, red-breasts, finches and thrushes without number sang their merry notes above the head of the unfortunate one who lay there. His son George grew to be the pride of his mother, and became a noble prince in beautiful Italy. Centuries have passed since then, yet to-day enthusiastic artists still make pilgrimages to the hillside where the sun shines so brightly, to lay wreaths on the grave of the great architect George Peregrinus of the princely house of the Greylocks.

They at least do not regard him who lies there as one born to misfortune.

THE NUTS

A CHRISTMAS STORY FOR MY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

THE NUTS.

A CHRISTMAS STORY FOR MY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

THE wounded colonel, whom we were nursing back to health in our house, was not allowed to walk long, and in the afternoon, after he had pottered about a little, he was obliged to rest in the comfortable old easy-chair, which was known as grandfather's chair.

When twilight fell, our dear guest lighted the last of the three pipes, which the doctor permitted him to smoke every day, and made a sign to the children, which the young people obeyed gladly, for they loved to listen to his stories.

The convalescent was under orders not to talk for more than half an hour at a time, for his wounds were so severe that our ex-

perienced physician declared it to be contrary to the laws of nature and quite phenomenal that he should be among the living at all.

As for his stories, they had never failed to hold the attention of his audience; this was partly due to the fact that he usually had to break them off at the point where the interest had reached its climax.

Moreover, the deep voice of the narrator was much gentler than one would have expected, after looking at the broad-shouldered, heavy figure, and there lay in his suppressed, and often whispered tones a secret charm, which the children were not the only ones to feel; besides which his eyes produced their share of the profound impression, for every emotion that disturbed his easily-excited soul found a reflection therein.

That the colonel openly preferred our six-year-old Hermy to his brothers and sis-

ters was due to the circumstance that the child had once burst into tears at a look from the officer, which the latter employed to call the children to order, if they were inattentive, or exhibited signs of unbelief when he had not expected it. After this Hermy was so evidently his darling that there was no further chance for Hermy's younger sister, who had at first promised to be the favourite, and I shall never forget the soft, almost motherly, caressing tones that came from that grey-bearded man with the large round head and strong face, when he sought to comfort the child.

It was remarkable to see how easily this man, who was accustomed to obedience, and famous for his bravery and keen energy, could become a child among children. He had lost a beloved wife, a little son, about Hermy's age, and a young daughter, and no doubt our numerous family reminded him of these departed ones.

As for his tales, he separated them into distinct categories. Some of them he began with the words: "Here I am," and then he held himself strictly to the truth. Others began: "Once upon a time." While the former were drawn mostly from his own full and eventful life, the latter were fairy stories, pure and simple, sometimes already well known, sometimes made up, wherein fairies, ghosts, elves, gnomes, goblins and dragons, will-o'-the-wisps, nixies, kelpies and dwarfs disported themselves.

Christmas was approaching, and the next day, Christmas-eve, the tree was to be lighted. On the twenty-third of December, a little while before the hour for story-telling, Hermy came home, and exhibited to his brothers the trifling presents, which he had chosen: an eraser for his father, a lead-pencil for his mother, a bag of nuts for his grandmother, and similar trifles which, though insignificant in themselves,

had nevertheless exhausted his little store of savings. His elder brothers, to whom he had exhibited with great pride these purchases, expressed none of the admiration which he had expected, but began to tease him by calling the things "trash," as indeed they were, and poking fun at the "wonderful presents" of their small brother; they would have been less cruel, perhaps, had he been one of their sisters.

Karl wanted to know what their father, who never was known to make a drawing, would do with an eraser, and Kurt added that he did not see the use of giving their grandmother nuts, when she had more in her own garden than all of them put together would receive on ten Christmas-eves.

Bright tears gathered in the eyes of the little one, and he cast a troubled look at his despised treasures, in which he had rejoiced so heartily only a short time before.

He began to sob quietly, and saying dejectedly: "But I hadn't any more money!" he stuffed his gifts, shorn of their glamour into his pockets.

The colonel had watched the scene in silence; now, however, he drew his favourite to him, kissed him, and caressed his fair curls. Then he invited him gaily to sit right close to him on the footstool, and bade the other children to sit down, too, and told Karl and Kurt to keep their ears wide open.

My wife and I entered at this moment—we heard later of what had happened—and begged the colonel to allow us to listen also. The permission was willingly granted; after the lamp was brought, for it was later than usual, and we had settled ourselves on the sofa, the colonel stroked his moustache for some time, and began, after he had gazed quietly before him for a moment: "To-day my story shall be

called, 'The Nuts.' Does that please you, Hermy?"

The little one smiled at him expectantly and nodded his head. The colonel continued:

"You believe, no doubt, children, that no one ever came back from the dead, and that therefore no mortal knows what Heaven looks like, nor Hell. But I — look at me well — I can tell you something about it."

Here he made a short pause while my wife handed him his pipe and a match. The children looked at one another in doubt and suspicion, for this was the first story of the colonel which had not begun with, "Here I am," or, "Once upon a time," and they were consequently uncertain whether it was a true story or one that he had made up. Wolfgang, who is thirteen and my oldest boy, and who already calls his younger brothers, "the young ones,"

—and promises to be a true child of the times, inclined to believe it the latter, but even he sat up straighter and looked puzzled as the colonel continued:

"The two balls that I have in here, and the sabre cut on my shoulder,—but you know how and where I received them—to be brief, I sank from my horse onto the grass in the afternoon, and not until the following morning was I found by the ambulance corps and carried to the hospital. There they brought me to life again. In the interim—which lasted for the half of a day and one whole night—I was certainly not alive like one of you, or any other two-legged creature endowed with five senses."

With these words his penetrating eyes glanced from Karl to Kurt; the girls caught hold of one another's hands and one could plainly read in their expressions that they considered it rash to be in such close proximity to a person who had erstwhile

been dead. It was fortunate for them that the resuscitated colonel was so good, and that there was no doubt about his actual existence, which was proved by his voice and the smoke that he puffed into the air during every pause.

"Yes, children," he began anew, "a great wonder was worked on me, an old man. This long body here lay on the bloody ground among groaning men, dying horses, broken gun-carriages, ammunition wagons, exploded bombshells, and discarded weapons; but my soul — I cannot have been too hardened a sinner in this world — my soul was permitted to soar to Heaven. One, two, three, as fast as you can say, 'That is an apple,' or 'The fair Ina has a pretty doll in her lap,' and it had arrived. And now — I can see it in your eyes — you would like to know how it seems in Heaven, and God knows I cannot blame you, for it is beautiful, marvellously beauti-

ful, only unfortunately I am not allowed even to attempt its description. That must ever remain a mystery to the living because — but that is no matter, and evil would befall me if I were to chatter."

At this point the colonel was interrupted by many expressions of disappointment, but he was resolute, and continued in a peremptory tone:

"That will do. Description indeed is forbidden to me; but there are certain of my experiences about which I may tell you. So listen! That Hell lies underneath Heaven you have doubtless heard from some one or other. Naturally the holy dead see and hear nothing of the pains of the lost, for that would entirely spoil the joys of Paradise for them; but now and then—I believe once a year—it is given to the blessed to look down into Hell. There is, however, one condition in particular attached to this privilege. When the dome

which conceals Hell from the sight of the angels is opened, it is for the relief of the condemned. God in his mercy has decreed that the saints shall look down into the abyss in order to tell St. Peter if they see among the damned any one from whom they have received any benefit, or of whom they have even heard any good. If the keeper of Heaven's gate is pleased with the generous action which the lost soul performed while on earth, he has the power of shortening the time of punishment, or can even pardon it altogether, and bid it enter into Paradise.

"As for me, I arrived in Paradise on a day when Hell was open to view, and came to know, thereby, many strange things.—Ah! That was the hardest part of my story; I trust that you have understood it?"

The narrator's glance sought the children's eyes once more; but this time ques-

tioningly rather than peremptorily. When the young lips all cried "yes," and "of course," he smiled, nodded his massive head amiably, and continued:

"That the angels are full of pity, and glad to relieve the misery of the unfortunate, whoever they are, and wherever they may be, goes without saying, and it will not be necessary to tell you how diligently they sought to remember some one good deed that might redound to the credit of one of the lost. But St. Peter is a mild and just judge, and the gleaning yielded but a small return, for only a few of the angels could recall any act that was worth mentioning. It was also granted to me to look into the place of torment, and the things I saw there were too awful. Picture it to yourself as you will! When I recovered from the horror that fell upon me, I recognized many men and women whom I had known on earth. Among them were

many whom I had been accustomed to consider pious and virtuous, and whom I had expected to find in a high place in Heaven, rather than there below, and yet of those very persons the Elect could recall the fewest deeds that had been done from purely generous motives. An act was mentioned of this one or that, which on the surface seemed good, sometimes even great,—but there on high the springs of human actions are open to view, as well as the real end, which the author had in mind, and these were always such that those who had performed the best deeds could be accredited with the least charitable intention. Their pious works had always been executed in order to make them conspicuous in the eyes of men, or to attain for themselves some distinction, or to flatter their vanity, or to arouse the envy of their neighbours, or to contribute in some indirect way to the increase of their riches. Perhaps

you may not altogether understand what I mean; but no matter, your mother may explain as much as she thinks good for you.

"The poor things who were disappointed, as well as the unfortunate ones for whom no voice was raised, made me very unhappy; but I could do nothing for them.

"Among the latter I noticed a woman whom I had known well on earth, and who deserved to be among the lost, I thought. I had never anticipated any other sentence for her. You do not understand, children, what a cold heart is; but hers had been either ice or stone. Although she had possessed more than was needed to gratify her own wants, she could never be moved by the most touching appeals of the poorest to relieve their distress. She had used other people to satisfy her selfish desires and then discarded them ruthlessly. She had gone through life without loving

one single soul—of that I felt convinced—and no one had loved her, and she had died unregretted. She must have been as wretched on earth as she was there in Hell; for which of us can be happy here, if we do not love and are not loved?

"'There is no chance of a voice being raised in her favour,' I said to myself. But I was wrong; for at that moment a lovely angel-child flew past me on its blue and white wings. Without any sign of fear it flew direct to St. Peter, who looked formidable enough with his long beard and great keys, and, pointing with its little forefinger to the hard-hearted woman, cried: 'She once gave me a handful of nuts.'

"'Really,' answered the keeper of Heaven. 'That was not much, and yet I am surprised; for that woman would not part with so much as a pin, during her life. But you little one, who were you on earth?'

"'Little Hannele was my name,' an-

swered the angel. 'I died of starvation, and only once did any one give me anything in my life to make me happy, and that was that woman yonder.'

"'Marvellous,' answered Peter, stroking his white beard. 'No doubt the nuts were given as a miserly payment of some service you did her.'

"'No, no,' the angel answered decidedly.

"'Well, tell us how it happened then,' the apostle commanded, and the dear little soul obeyed:

"'My sick mother and I lived in the city all alone, for father was dead. Just before Christmas we had nothing more to eat. So mother, though she lay in bed and her head and hands were burning, made some little sheep of bits of wood and cotton and I carried them to the Christmas market. There I sat on some steps and offered them for sale to the passers-by; but nobody wanted them. Hours passed, and it was very cold;

the open wound in my knee, which no one saw, pained me so, and the frost in my fingers and toes burned and itched dreadfully. Evening came, the lamps were lighted, but I dared not go home; for only one person had thrown a copper into my lap, and I needed more to buy a bit of bread and a few coals. My own pangs hurt me, but that mother lay at home alone, with no one to hand her anything, or support her when her breathing became difficult, hurt me still more. I could hardly bear to sit on the cold steps any longer, and my eyes were blind with tears. A barrel was set down in front of the house, and while a clerk was rolling it over the sidewalk into the shop, the stream of passers was stopped. That woman there—I remember her well—stood still in front of me. I offered her one of my sheep, and looked at her through my tears. She seemed so hard and stern, that I thought: 'She won't give me anything.'

But she did. It seemed suddenly as if her face grew softer, and her eyes kinder. She glanced at me, and before I knew it, she had put her hand in the bag which she carried on her arm, and thrown the nuts into my lap. The cask had been rolled into the shop by this time, and the throng of people carried her along. She tried to stop. It was not easy, and she only did it to toss me a second, third, and fourth handful of the most beautiful walnuts. I can still see it all, as if it were to-day! Then she felt in her pocket, probably to get some money for me, but the press of people was too strong for her to stand against it longer. I doubt if she heard that I thanked her.'

"Here the angel broke off, and threw a kiss to the condemned woman, and St. Peter asked her how it happened that she, who had been so deaf to all appeals from the poor, had been so sweetly generous to the child.

"The tormented woman answered amid her loud sobs: 'The tearful eyes of the little one reminded me of my small sister, who died a painful death before I had grown to be hard and wicked, and a strange sensation—I know not how it happened myself—overpowered me. It seemed as if my heart warmed within me, and something seemed to say to me that I would never forgive myself as long as I lived, and would be even unhappier than I was, if I did not give the child something to rejoice over at Christmas time. I longed to draw her towards me and kiss her. After I had tossed her half of the nuts, which I had just bought, I felt happier than I had for many a day, and I would certainly have given her some money, though only a little . . . .'

"But Peter interrupted her. He had heard enough, and as he knew that it was impossible for any one in Heaven or Hell to tell an untruth, he nodded to her, say-

ing: 'That was, beyond dispute, a good deed, but it is too small to counterbalance the great weight of your bad deeds. Perhaps it may lighten your punishment. Still great riches were meted out to you on earth, and what were a few nuts to you! The motive that urged you to bestow them is pleasing in the sight of the Lord, I acknowledge; but as I said before, your charity was too paltry for you to be released from your pains because of it.'

"He turned to go, but a clear voice of wonderful sweetness held him back. It was that of the Saviour, who advanced with majestic dignity towards the apostle and spoke: 'Let us first hear if the alms-giving of which we have just learned was really too small to plead for leniency towards this sinning soul. Let us hear' — turning to the angel — 'what became of the nuts.'

"'O dear Saviour,' answered the angel, 'I ate half of them, and I was grateful

to you, for I felt that I owed them to your bounty as they were my 'little Christ child' as the people in the city where we lived called a Christmas present.'

"'You see, Peter,' the Saviour interrupted the angel. 'Do we not owe it to the nuts of that woman that a pure child's soul was led to us? That in itself is no small thing! Tell what further happened to you?'

"'I ate most of them,' the little girl answered, but I had still more to eat by Christmas-eve; for the people who had looked at me when the woman threw something into my lap were interested in my suffering, and soon I had sold all six sheep, and besides many pennies and groschen, one big thaler had flown into my lap. With these I was able to buy mother many things that she stood in sore need of, and, though she died on New Year's morning, she had had many little comforts during her last days.'

"The Anointed cast another look full of meaning at Peter, when a large and beautiful angel, the spirit of the mother of the cherub, began: 'If you will permit me, O, holy Jesus, I, too, would like to say a word in favor of the condemned. Before Hannele came home with the nuts, I lay in bed without hope, or help in my great suffering. I had lost all faith, for my prayers had not been heard, and in the bitterness of my heart, it seemed that you, who were said to be the friend of the poor on earth, and God the Father, had forgotten us in our misery, in order to overwhelm the rich with greater gifts. In my distress, and that of the child; I had learned to curse the day on which we were born. Oh! how wild were my thoughts during the time that Hannele was trying to sell the sheep, and did not come home; though I needed her so sorely. I was often so thirsty that my mouth burned as with fire, and the mo-

ments when I gasped for breath were frequent, and almost unbearable when no one was there to lift me up. I called those people liars who would persuade the poor that they had a merciful Father in Heaven, who looked upon them as his children, and cared for them. But when Hannele came home, and lighted the little lamp, and I saw her tiny face, where for a long time I had seen no smile, but only pain and grief, now beaming with joy, when I saw the nuts and the other good things which she had brought, and saw her pleasure in them, my belief in thee, O Lord, and in the kind Father returned, and I ceased not to be grateful to the end. If now, in the glory of thy magnificence, I know bliss unutterable, I owe it to that woman, and to the fact that she was good enough to throw the nuts into Hannele's apron.'

"Peter nodded affirmatively. Then he bowed before the Saviour and said: 'The

little gift of the condemned soul has indeed borne better fruit than I imagined; yet when I tell you what a great sinner she was on earth. . . . '

"'I know,' the Son of God interrupted him. 'Before we decide upon the fate of this woman, let us hear what the child did with the rest of the nuts, for we know that she did not eat them all. Now my little angel, what became of the last of them? Speak on. Gladly will I listen to you.'

"Hannele began anew: 'After they had buried mother, they sent me into the country among the mountains, for they said it was not the duty of the city to care for me, but that of the village parish, where my parents were born. So I was taken there. The six nuts that I had saved I took with me to play with. This I most enjoyed doing in the spring, alone on the little strip of grass behind the Poor-house, in which I was the only child. Besides me there were

but three old women 'being fed to death,' as the peasants used to say. Two of my companions were blind, and the third was dull-witted and gazed ever straight before her. Not one of them noticed anything that happened around them, but my heart used to grow light when everything about me budded, and sprouted, and burst into bloom. My body was always aching but my pains could not lessen my enjoyment of the spring. Wherever I looked, men were sowing and planting. It was the first time that I had ever seen it, and the wish came over me to confide something to the good earth that would take root, and sprout, and grow green and high for me.

"'So I stuck four of my nuts into the ground. I put them as far apart in the small space as I could, so that if big trees came from my seeds they might not stand in one another's way, but might all enjoy the air and the sunshine that I was so

thankful for. I saw my seeds sprout, but what became of them afterwards I did not live to see. Two years after I sowed them a famine fell upon us. The poor weavers who lived in the mountain village had all they could do to nourish wife and child. There was little left for the Poor-house. As I was already ill I could not stand the misery, and I was the first to die of the dreadful fever caused by hunger. Only one of the blind women, and the dull-witted one followed the sack in which I was buried — for who would have paid for a coffin? The last two nuts I divided with the old women. Each one of us had a half, and how gladly we ate the little morsel, for even a taste of any dainty seemed good to us, after we had lived on nothing but bread and potatoes. From here I watched the other nuts grow to be trees. All four had straight stems and thick crowns. Under one of them that stood near a spring, which is now called the

Fresh Spring, an old carpenter who came to the Poor-house built a bench.'

"Here another angel interrupted the little narrator with the question: 'Do you mean the nut-tree in Dorbstädt?' and, receiving an answer in the affirmative, he cried: 'I, Master, I am that old carpenter, and during my last summers, I had no greater pleasure than to sit by the Fresh Spring under the nut-tree, and while I smoked my pipe to think of my old wife, whom I was soon to find again with you. In the autumn, too, many a dry brown leaf found its way among the more expensive tobacco ones.'

"'And I,' cried a former pedler, breaking into the carpenter's story, 'I assuredly have not forgotten the nut-tree, where I always set down my pack when my shoulders were nearly broken, and under whose shade I used to rest my weary limbs before entering the village.'

"'I, too! How often have I stopped under the spreading branches of that tree on a hot summer day and found refreshment!' cried a former post-messenger of Dorbstädt. A porter who had also lived there added his praises.

"'But the nut-trees were cut down many years ago,' the latter added.

"'I saw it,' cried the spirit of little Hannele, and one heard from her tone how she deplored it. 'They were felled when the Poor-house was given up. But the great Son of God has now heard what he wished to know.'

"'No, no,' the Saviour answered, 'I should still like to know what became of the wood of these trees.'

"The voices of several angels were heard at the same moment, for many of the poor weavers of Dorbstädt were to be found in the Heavenly Kingdom. St. Peter, however, bade them to be quiet, and permitted

only the one who had last entered the Abode of the Blessed to speak.

"'I was the village doctor,' this one began, 'and I quitted the earth because I, too, fell a victim to the pestilence of which many of the poor people were dying, and against which I fought with all my powers, but with small success. I can tell you all that you wish to know, my Master, for, during forty-five years, I devoted my humble services to the sick poor there. When Hannele died in our Poor-house — it happened before my time — the misery was even greater than at present. The weavers were ground down by the large manufacturers, until an energetic man built a factory in our village, and paid them better wages. As the population then increased, and consequently the number of patients, space was wanting in which to house them, for the dilapidated Poor-house — whither they were carried — was no longer large enough to

accommodate them all. Therefore the parish, aided by the owner of the factory, built a hospital for the whole district, and the site of the old Poor-house was chosen for it. The beautiful nut-trees which Hannele had planted had to be destroyed. I was sorry to be obliged to give the order, but we needed the ground where they stood. As we had to be economical in everything, big and little, we had planks sawn out of the trees for our use.'

"At this point another spirit interrupted the physician. 'I have lain in one of the beds made from the wood. At home I slept on a bundle of straw, and very uncomfortable it was when I was shaken by the fever. In the hospital all was different, and when I lay in my comfortable bed, I felt as if I were already in Heaven.'

"'And I,' cried another broad-winged angel, 'for ten years I walked with the crutches that were made for me from the

nut-tree by the Fresh Spring, and old Conrad, below on the earth, is still using them.'

"'And mine also,' another continued, 'were of the same wood. I had lain for a long time on my back; but after I got them, I learned to walk with them and they enabled me to stand before the loom, and to earn bread once more for my family. That man yonder from Hochdorf has had the same experience, and the wooden leg of William, the toll-gate keeper, who entered here shortly before me, was made of wood from the nut-tree.'

"'I owe it a debt of gratitude, too, but for an entirely different service,' said a beautiful angel, as it bowed its crowned head reverently before the Son of God. 'My lot below was a very hard one. I was early left a widow, and I supported my children entirely by the work of my hands. By dint of great effort I brought them up well, and my three sons grew to be brave

men, who took care of themselves, and helped their mother. But all three, my Master, were lost to me, taken away by the unfathomable wisdom of the Father. Two fell in war, the third was killed by the machinery while at his work. That broke my strength, and when they brought me to the hospital I was on the verge of despair, and life seemed a greater burden than I could bear. Your image, my Saviour, had just been finished by a sculptor, who had carved it from the wood of the nut-tree by the Fresh Spring. They put it up opposite to my bed. It represented you, my Lord, on the cross, and your head bowed in agony, with its crown of thorns, was a very sorrowful sight. Yet I paid but small heed to it. One morning, however—it was the anniversary of the death of my two dear sons, who had lost their lives, fighting bravely side by side for their Fatherland—on that morning the sun fell upon your sad face, and

bleeding hands pierced by the nails, and then I reflected how bitterly you had suffered, though innocent, that you might redeem us, and how your mother must have felt to lose such a child. Then a voice asked me if I had any right to complain, when the Son of God himself had willingly endured such torments for our sake, and I felt compelled to answer no, and determined then to bear patiently whatever might be laid upon me, a poor, sinful woman. Thenceforth, my Lord, was your image my consolation and, since the wood of which it was made came from the tree planted by Hannele near the Fresh Spring, I owe beyond doubt the better years that followed, and the joy of being with you in Paradise, my Saviour, to the nuts which that condemned woman gave to the child.'

"Humbly she bowed her head again. The Son of God turned to St. Peter, saying: 'Well, Peter?'

"The latter called to the guardians of Hell: 'Let her go free, the gates of Heaven are open to her. How rich and manifold, O Lord! is the fruit that springs from the smallest gift offered in true love!'

"'You are right,' answered the Saviour, gently, and turned away."

The colonel had talked for a longer time than was allowed him by his doctor, and he needed rest. When he appeared again at supper time, in order to help us eat our Christmas carps, he found little Hermy standing with Karl and Kurt before the fire, and he noticed how his favourite's eyes rested with pleasure on the nuts which he had bought for his grandmother; and how the older boys, who were only too prone to tease their younger brother, treated him with a certain tenderness, as if they had something to make up for.

At table we overheard Kurt say to Karl: "Little Hermy's present for grandmother was not a bad idea," to which Karl answered quickly: "I am going to put away some of my nuts to-morrow, and plant them in the spring."

"To make a pair of crutches for me, or in order that you may go to Heaven?" asked the colonel.

The boy blushed, and could find no answer; but I came to his rescue, and replied: "No, his trees shall remind us of you, Colonel, and of your stories. When we give, we will, in remembrance of you, give in all love and willingness, and when we receive, even the smallest gift, we will only ask in what spirit it was offered."

THE END.

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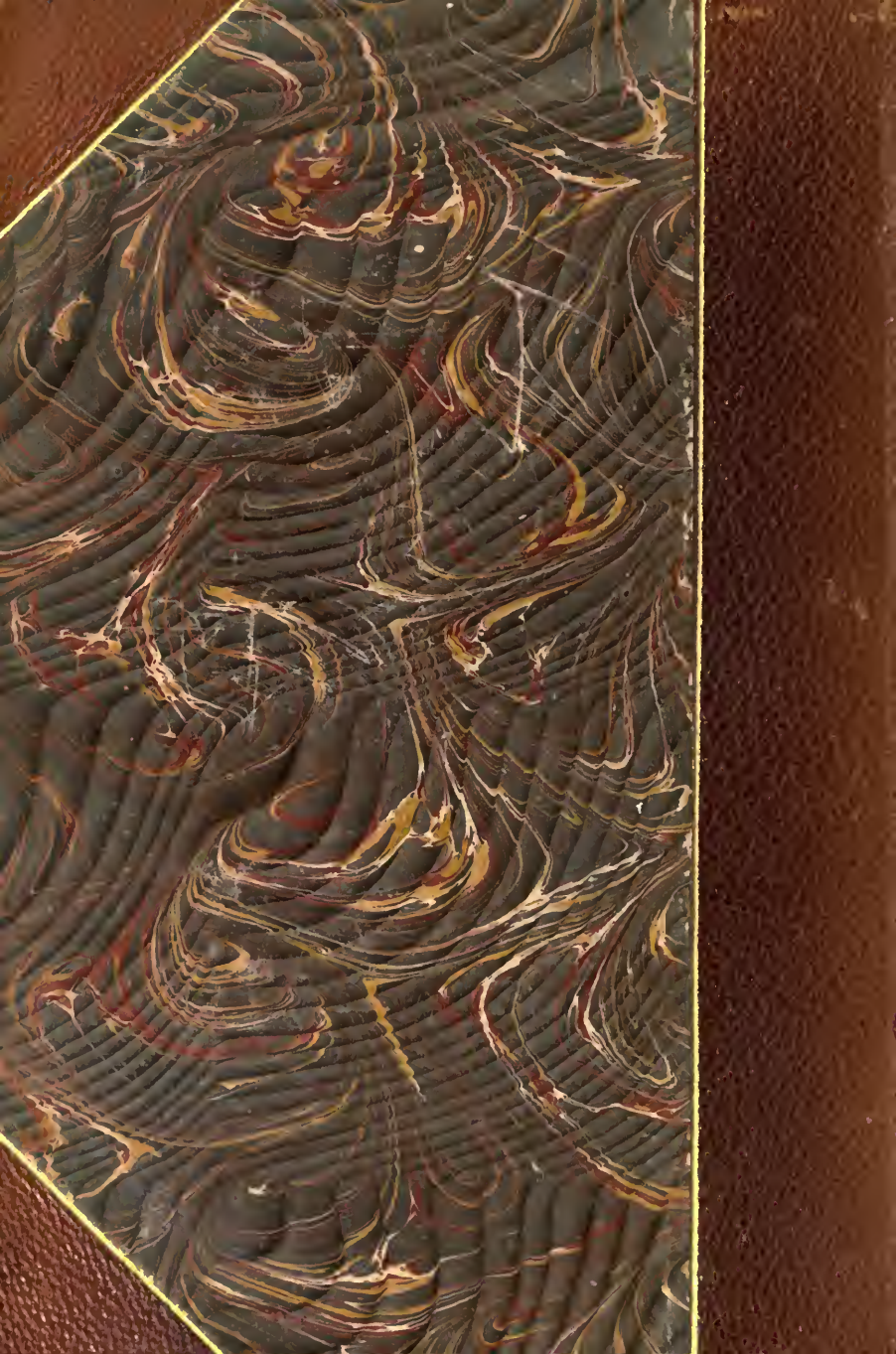
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